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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"LOVE AND LAW &c."

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"Now was there made, fast by the Touris wall,
A garden fair."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE

TOWER GARDENS.

CHAPTER I.

ALISON IN HER ELEMENT.

BY Sunday morning the winds and rain had abated, a cold leaden sky hung over the City, a cold drizzle filled its deserted streets.

On that dull, grey Sunday, Arthur Bayliss awoke earlier than usual to a consciousness of extreme wretchedness. He rang his bell furiously, but on Sundays Mr. and Mrs. Robbins, his caretakers, were not early risers; so he had to ring several times and wait long before John Harbuckle's Mr. Robbins' brother William, who answered to the name of Jim, made his appearance; and longer still before Mrs. Jim had made that cup of tea without which Arthur Bayliss felt that on such a morning he could not face life.

This prolonged waiting afflicted Mr. Bayliss with the most heartrending sorrow as well as with the direst impatience. When at last Mr. Jim Robbins appeared, he heard a few remarks which showed that absence from his native land had not affected Mr. Bayliss's power of using the vernacular.

After that outburst of wrath, Arthur Bayliss felt quite spent, and as if he should sink through the floor; but the remembrance of Jessie's face, worn and pale as he had seen it last night, roused him to action.

He had not heard of the fainting fit. Jessie, poor child, as soon as she could speak, had begged so piteously,

"Don't tell my father! Don't tell my father!" Her anxiety had been so wholly to spare him distress, that the others had been obliged to say nothing. Jessie, however, had looked so unlike the bright girl he had taken to the theatre, that it was but natural her father should that morning wish to see her again as early as possible.

Arthur Bayliss had therefore a sufficient reason for getting up and going out. He knew it was about the worst thing he could do; but he was in the state of body and mind in which a man is compelled to make a martyr of himself, and—although tortures would not

make him admit as much—of every one else. So that a very slight cause would have made him feel that it was as important for him to go round to Trinity Square as if his life or Jessie's depended upon it. He dressed himself with great difficulty in his warmest clothes and went out.

It is inconceivable that anyone in London that morning was really comfortable, certainly Mrs. James Bayliss was not.

She was cold, indeed shivering, but she looked at the Japanese umbrella and the pots of ferns in the dining-room grate, and could not resolve to have them removed; it was so absurd to light a fire in July.

"Of course in the North we had our fires laid all the year round, but in London it is too ridiculous!" she said.

"Oh, Auntie," said Jessie, shuddering with cold, "my father will be here soon and he's sure to want a fire. Do have one lighted!"

"Well, but you'll be going to the Temple or the Abbey; we'll have one lighted after church," said Mrs. Bayliss, who did not like to give in. "Really you ought to be a little heroic! One should learn how to stand such trifles!"

"I don't like trifling discomforts," said Jessie, "they wear you out, and then you haven't

strength to bear heavy troubles. I don't like them at all. Why shouldn't we be comfortable?"

But Mrs. Bayliss was resolute.

Presently her brother-in-law arrived.

"Good heavens, Mary! What an ice-house!" were his first words. "Jessie, are you mad that you're sitting in this well? What do you mean by it?"

"Arthur! you're very ill!" exclaimed Mrs. Bayliss, noticing his sunken eyes and yellow skin.

He answered by lying down on the sofa with his face to the wall, in an attitude of physical prostration and mental despair that frightened Jessie, and softened her aunt's heart.

Mrs. Bayliss was too experienced a woman to be alarmed; but she was touched; for it would seem that the sight of a man lying with his face to the wall appeals strongly to feminine sympathies.

Queen Jezebel, we may remember, was by no means a tender-hearted woman, yet when her lord came home and laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, she at once set her wicked wits to work to help him.

Men sometimes take a mean advantage of this well-known feminine susceptibility. A sensible woman however, is careful to discriminate between real suffering and a fit of sulks, and

while for the first she has nothing but tenderness, the second she leaves to cure itself, lest, at some unguarded moment, she should be tempted to throw something hard at the recumbent head.

There was no question as to the reality of Arthur Bayliss's misery. With half a glance Mrs. Bayliss recognized the symptoms, for in a milder form her late husband had had similar attacks.

It was almost amusing to see how she changed at once; how thoroughly she understood her business, and threw herself heart and soul into it. In less time than it has taken me to write this page, she and the girls had the Japanese umbrella and ferns out of the grate, a fine fire roaring in it, the sofa drawn up as close as possible to that fire, and Arthur Bayliss snugly tucked up in an eiderdown quilt, and Jessie sitting by his side, looking pale and very much alarmed.

Then they all subsided into a profound quiet. Mrs. Bayliss took up her station with her feet on the fender and turned to the Psalms for the day; Jessie sat quite still with one hand on the quilt; but there seemed nothing for Alison to do. She was not particularly anxious; her father's attacks had always passed off in a few hours, so she thought that

as she did not seem to be wanted by anyone she might as well go to church; and she whispered as much to her mother.

Mrs. Bayliss, who was now in a most delightful temper, nodding assent, Alison stole softly from the room, shutting the door behind her very noiselessly.

As Alison went with hushed step upstairs, an idea occurred to her; it was the result of her feeling for once quite free and her own mistress.

She had secretly cherished a certain wish ever since she had been in the City; but hitherto she had not found herself at liberty to carry it out.

She wanted to see the City churches; a great many of them—all of them, in fact. Not only the attractive ones, most of which she had already seen, but the scarcely known rank and file.

On other Sundays she had either gone to St. Paul's or to the Abbey, or to hear some great preacher, or with her mother to lovely St. Olave's, or with John Harbuckle to the King's Weigh-house Chapel, where her uncle was a Church member, and where her grandfather had been a deacon for many years. Coming or going when she had happened to be alone with John Harbuckle they had sometimes

looked in for a moment at different churches they had passed; but Alison's wish to see all the churches in the City was as yet far from being gratified; and, indeed, there are a very great many to see.

"I'll go to-day," she said. "I'm all alone; I shall never have a better chance! It's not absolutely raining, although it certainly has 'a tear in its eye.' I'll put on my winter jacket, and go."

I may tell you, while Alison dresses, that, with a few exceptions, the City churches are very difficult of access. Alison had already spent much time and many shillings in hunting up sextons and keys. Once the only name and address on the church door had been the churchwarden's. When she had found the place, it turned out to be a teabroker's counting-house, and she had not liked to go in. Another key she had traced to a large boot-shop.

Entering, she found the bootmaker fitting a gentleman. She asked, innocently enough, for the key; but the man looked at her as suspiciously as if she had been a well-known burglar, and said there was a lot of plate in the church and he could not trust her. She had begged for someone to come with her; but he said he could not leave his shop and had

no one he could send; so she had to give up that key altogether.

She had also tried lingering in churches after week-day service (for she was a devout girl, and did not like to look about her during prayers or sermon), but as a rule the sexton or sextoness was in a most terrible hurry to shut up and get home; so that was not very satisfactory. When she had gone in early it had not been pleasant to steal about on tip-toe while others were assembling for worship, or perhaps already on their knees; but on the whole, she thought, the best way would be to go out and see two or three churches as soon as they were open and take her chance for the rest. There is really no way of seeing most of the City churches that is not more or less repugnant to a religious mind; but this seemed to be the least so.

In a very few minutes Alison had on her thick jacket and a little black bonnet that damp could hardly injure, and was feeling eager to leave the house and plunge into her own element. The house was oppressive to her; she was needing change.

She had given Jessie a great deal of unobstructive sympathy; it had told upon her.

She stole silently downstairs. A death-like stillness filled the house. The empty hall

with its closed door looked quite different on Sundays from the busy entrance she saw on week-days.

She opened one leaf of the heavy double door and went out.

Not a creature was to be seen anywhere.

The trees had suffered much from the gale; pieces of boughs strewed the walks of the square garden.

A perfect buzz of bells greeted Alison's ears; she stood for a minute on the door-step listening to them. Some were quite near, some but a little further off, others more and more distant; there were bells overhead, bells all around, bells of all sorts and sound, from Aldgate's full-pealing gamut to the solitary tinkle of some water-side mission-hall among the docks: bells everywhere and innumerable, suggesting to her that she was standing in the centre of a vast circle of sound, the circumference of which stretched away miles and miles all over the country; bells from London's City to Land's End and John O'Groat's.

Alison stopped to listen. It was not often she came out alone, and one can hardly enjoy listening when in company. She thought of some lines she had copied a few days since from old Capgrave the Chronicler, and which

she had been singing about the house to the Eighth Gregorian tone:

> "Blessed Ynglond, full of melodie,
> Thou may'st be yclepp'd of Angel nature;
> Thou servest God with such busie cure!"

Presently, she went on to the corner of Barking Alley and looked towards the Tower. The great space of the hill was empty, wide and very desolate.

She turned into the church-yard under the shadow of the gigantic warehouses. The shops were closed; not a living being but herself and a wandering cat was to be seen; the old church, with its three low aisles and its quaint open belfry, looked as rural as if deep buried in some country village, while from that belfry there came a soft pathetic chime, that seemed to mourn over and over again, with many a minor cadence:

> "My City's dead,
> Dead my City;
> My folk all fled:
> 'Pity!—Pity!'" *

Ah me! I should dearly love to follow Alison in her wanderings among the churches; but it would take too long—besides it might

---

* The bells chime something like this; try the four lines to these notes:

Lah, te, doh, $\widehat{\text{soh}}$,	A, B, C, $\widehat{\text{G}}$;
Lah, doh, te, $\widehat{\text{soh}}$: *Repeat.*	A, C, B, $\widehat{\text{G}}$, *Repeat.*

not be interesting except to a few. So I must tear myself away. I see her going into Barking Church to look at the grand sword-rests on the Aldermanic pew. I see her crossing Tower Street to St. Dunstan's; I see her stopping there, and reading a tender little inscription on a tablet enshrining the pious, childish, last words of a little girl of six. I see her—but no, no; I must not go with her, and yet how much I wish I could!

Alison had been into more than a dozen churches before she found herself, about two hours later, in the neighbourhood of the Herald's College, Queen Victoria Street, with her face again towards Tower Hill and her mind filled with grand organ-tones, white surplices, more or less well-chanted psalms, decorous pulpit utterances, poor stained glass, fine old dark woodwork, fighting lions, gilt unicorns' horns, and very small congregations—congregations so small that, in one instance, from the door, which she cautiously pushed ajar, she could see no one but the clergyman and the pew-opener.

It was a curious experience; painful upon reflection; but, at the time, she thoroughly enjoyed it. Not that she, after all, saw the churches well; for though it was easy enough to do so before service, as soon as it had

begun, the gloomy lobbies were so zealously guarded that a hasty glimpse was often all she could obtain.

The last church she entered suddenly took her back to Scotland and the Reverend Andrew Baird.

It was as plain and, I must add, as ugly as his at Kirkhope. A clergyman, in a black Geneva gown and bands like Mr. Baird's, was addressing five persons from a high pulpit a long way off. The sermon seemed a good one, the preacher so like Mr. Baird, that she almost expected to hear him pray, "Bless and prosper the church of our fathers, the Church of Scotland." Alison stayed a few minutes to listen, and then quietly slipped away. This was of course shocking, but what else could she do under the circumstances? "Dear old Birrendale! Well, I've only just time to get home now," she said, as she came out and caught sight of the clock projecting from the church wall. In a few minutes she was in Queen Victoria Street, where for the first time since she had left home she felt uncomfortably alone and unprotected.

The broad new thoroughfare, on other days so handsome and so eminently respectable, looked really quite disreputable now. It was not deserted as the lanes had been; gangs of

men, walking very fast, as if to catch trains or boats, hurried by her, they all looked very rough and uncouth. The well-to-do artizan was no more to be seen than the banker or merchant.

There were more objectionable gangs, too, that, far from being in a hurry, seemed to have nothing to amuse themselves with but lurching up against each other, or indulging in coarse play with the two or three girls of their own class who were loitering about.

They all stared at Alison. She felt very uncomfortable, walked as fast as she could, and was thinking that perhaps she had better take a cab, when, just before she turned from Queen Victoria Street into Cannon Street, a familiar form came in sight, a form as different from the roughs about as Sunday in the City is from a Birrendale Sabbath.

Mac? No, not Mac, but Mac's cousin.

"It can't possibly be Alec Carruthers!" she said; "and yet it must be either Alec or his double."

The figure was a few yards in front of Alison, and getting over the ground with that long even swing peculiar to those whose next-door neighbour lives five miles off; the steady stride of a man used to getting along country roads.

"It is Alec! What had I better do? Perhaps he can tell me about Mac! Anything would be better than this horrible suspense! I must run or he'll be gone."

He was going along Cannon Street, gaining ground rapidly; there was no time for deliberation; so, heedless of everything except the chance of taking news to Jessie, she ran and soon came up to him.

"Mr. Carruthers!" she exclaimed, stopping just behind him, flushed and half out of breath.

He turned at once.

"Miss Bayliss! I—I—was hoping to—I thought perhaps I might meet some of you," he answered, in a curiously vague and uneasy way.

Alec Carruthers was looking in very much better health than when Alison had seen him last; but his flush, as he spoke, was still too delicate. It was a troubled flush, and his eyes were troubled too.

"I am very glad I happened to see you," said Alison; but she felt as if there was an uncomfortable awkwardness between them.

"Yes; so am I," returned Alec, but with more decided uneasiness.

It was evident that both knew something was wrong; but that neither was at all

certain what next to do or say on the subject that was occupying the mind of each. They walked a few steps in silence.

"Isn't it sad about poor Mac!" began Alec, presently, in a very grievous voice.

"Sad? What has happened?" asked Alison, hurriedly.

"Don't you know?"—and he paused an instant—"he's been nearly killed! Indeed, we don't know yet whether he will recover," said Alec, with pathetic directness.

"Nearly killed! We didn't know!" said Alison, under her voice, greatly shocked.

"You didn't know! That's what I wanted to find out," said Alec, as if addressing himself.

"But tell me—how did it happen? What is it that has happened?" demanded Alison. "Poor fellow! I was certain something dreadful must have happened!"

"I don't just know," said Alec, more vaguely than ever; "I don't know quite the beginning of it; but, as he was going down the Strand on Wednesday morning with Donaldson of Langdyke, an omnibus horse, in struggling to start, cast a shoe, and it struck the poor fellow just here," touching the side of his own forehead. "Saved the temple only by the fraction of an inch!"

"Is he horribly hurt?" asked Alison, with a shudder, looking up at Alec.

Alec turned slightly away, seeming much troubled.

"They thought at first it would be fatal. Donaldson telegraphed to us at once. We all came South by the next train. We have him in some rooms in Craven Street, Strand."

"How frightful! Is he conscious?" asked Alison. "Poor fellow! We have been wondering all the week what could have happened; we've had a dreadful week!"

"Have you really?" said Alec; but there was so much genuine sympathy in Alison's tone and face that it made him hate the suspicion in his own as soon as the words had passed his lips.

"Really?—of course—really! Why do you ask?" said Alison, with indignation.

"Hasn't she found another admirer?—your cousin, I mean," asked Alec, as if groping about in the dark.

"Everyone admires her, of course! I don't know what you mean; I don't understand your allusion," said Alison, sharply.

"There isn't a rival?" asked Alec.

"No!" replied Alison, putting as much point-blank emphasis into the syllable as it could possibly be made to bear.

"Then there's just a miserable mistake somewhere. I told poor Mac I was certain there must be!" said Alec, looking still very distressed and anxious, for he was exceedingly attached to his cousin and very unhappy about him.

"Mistake! Of course there must be, if he can think such nonsense as that!" exclaimed Alison. "I've been telling Jessie all the week I was certain there was a mistake somewhere; but she won't believe me. She thinks he has left her—forgotten her—forsaken her."

"Left her! Why he's mad about her! It was not until this morning he was able to tell me. I knew something was on his mind. I was worrying myself to find it out, I couldn't think what had come to him. He told me this morning; he raved about her to me; he said he didn't care to get better, that he wished he'd been killed outright. He seems just broken up about her, poor fellow. I didn't know what to do—I was sure he was wrong, but I didn't know what to do, so I just wandered on down here. I thought I should like to speak to you about Mac—but I didn't know whether I ought to do so, so I just wandered on-and-on and came down here."

"But—but—but—" stammered Alison, "I

don't understand it at all. He must be delirious."

"I don't think so; he was clear enough on other subjects. He declared to me he saw her with his own eyes with another man, who seemed very devoted to her, and whom, he says, he is sure she was encouraging. He saw them together at the theatre."

"At the theatre! Oh! that explains it all," said Alison. "We have only been once to the theatre since we have been in London, and that was last Tuesday. We went with a relative of ours whom we had not seen for some years; he was the rival, I suppose."

"I suppose so, I suggested as much to him. I said, 'It might be a relative,' but he said she hadn't any man relative left."

"He was mistaken," said Alison, curtly.

"I'm very glad to hear you say so," said Alec.

"Why," said Alison, her voice trembling with indignation, "Jessie fainted dead away in my arms yesterday! She'd been waiting for Mac ever since eleven on Wednesday, the time he promised in his last note to come; she was worn out, poor darling, with suspense, and she just fainted dead away. I felt I could have killed Mac, when I saw the poor child so broken down! We ought to have been

told—you ought to have sent to us; you can tell that to Mac if you like, perhaps it will do him good. Why should he think such nonsense? He ought to believe in Jessie, of course he ought! I don't understand people being so fond of each other (as I suppose they are) and not trusting each other at all!"

"I suppose they can't help it," said Alec, simply.

"There's perhaps something in that," said Alison, dryly.

"I really think there must be," returned Alec, as if pondering the subject. "One's people are a very great anxiety, aren't they?" he added. "I made them all anxious last year, and now I've got well there's poor Mac."

Alison thought there was something very sweet and gentle about her companion as he put the question. She sighed a little in response.

"Would you like to see Jessie and tell her?" she asked a moment or two afterwards.

"I would far rather leave it in your hands," he answered, as if frightened at the bare idea. "I will send you a bulletin by the evening post, you will get it first thing in the morning."

"You think he will recover?"

"I hope so. They seem to think he will.

My dose of medicine will, I imagine, do him a great deal of good." He paused. "We shall be able to arrange this little affair, shan't we? We will make it come right."

"I don't see that it needs arranging," said Alison. "A little common-sense is all that's needed, but that's a gift people never have, under certain circumstances. I'm very glad I met you, because Jessie frightened me so much yesterday when she fainted away. It was quite by chance I happened to come this way. I thought I would like to look at a good many of the City churches; that is why I'm so far from home."

"This is the City?" asked Alec, interrupting her, and gazing around him.

"Yes; but it looks quite different on week-days. It's shabby and dirty now; it's very different on other days. This is East-cheap."

"Eastcheap! How delightfully Shakespearean! Where's the 'Boar's Head?'"

"We've passed it; or rather the sign that does duty for it; and we've passed London Stone," said Alison.

"What a pity! Will you show them to me some day?" asked Alec.

"But you don't really care," said Alison, brightening. "I can't show such things to

people who don't care. I should be afraid of boring you."

"You wrong me; just now we are both too anxious—but, as a rule, few subjects interest me more. I've never been before into the City; I was just wandering down, you know, feeling, somehow, that I was getting nearer to you, and puzzling my brains what to do about poor Mac and your cousin, hoping something would turn up. I'm so glad we happened to meet."

But anxious as they both might be, they were both interested in the piece of road between King William's Statue and the Tower.

Alison very greatly preferred Alec Carruthers to poor Mac. He was, it must be admitted, as intelligent a listener as she was a talker; and how great is the gift of listening!

"You think poor Mac will get better?" Alison asked, when at last they stopped before the house in Trinity Square. "Won't you come in and talk to them about it all? I really think you ought to do so."

"Do you object to my leaving it in your hands?" asked Alec, nervously. "Do you know, I couldn't face Jessie unless—unless I were obliged. Pray take it out of my hands. You don't object?"

Alison thought of Arnold Birkett and said:

"No—oh no! I'll break the news to poor Jessie. You will be sure to write, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll make it right with poor Mac. He was going to rush down here in a state of frantic jealousy when the accident happened! It was about half-past ten on Wednesday morning that it happened. Donaldson insisted on Mac's going a little way down the Strand to look at some particular sort of bag he wanted. Mac was to go with him and to hurry down here the moment after the thing was chosen, when the accident happened. Donaldson was in an awful way about it, so he had need to be, for I believe Mac is about his last chance. It's astonishing what a hold the poor fellow has gained over him in so short a time."

"But tell me, we needn't feel anxious about Mac, need we?" asked Alison, kindly.

"I suppose we need not feel anxious," returned Alec, gravely. "Unfortunately—(I speak for myself)—we can't help it, you know. Good-bye—I'll be sure to write. I'm so glad I met you; it has taken quite a weight off my mind."

"And off mine," returned Alison. "Only I can't help asking myself: 'How will she take it?'"

CHAPTER II.

HOW SHE TOOK IT.

MEANWHILE the Sunday morning passed slowly and heavily to my poor Jessie. There she sat, still as a stone, with her hand resting on the quilt which covered her prostrate father, her gaze towards the window and the leaden sky beyond; her heart benumbed with dull misery.

After the first few minutes, she was not even alarmed about her father. She looked once or twice at Mrs. Bayliss placidly reading by the fire, with her feet on the fender, and Topsy, the black cat, purring beside them, and knew she need not be frightened.

Presently, when the room grew warmer, her father moved, took her little hand between both his own broad palms, kissed it, and holding it to him, as he had often held Jessie's own self when she was a little child, fell asleep.

It was her left hand; her right arm she placed on the head of the sofa and rested her brow upon it.

She felt strangely weary. Her father's mute caress of her hand aroused her a little from the numbness that had been enfolding over her and made her long to weep her very life away; but she wept not, only sat quite still, with her head bowed on to her arm that rested on the sofa.

"Last Sunday, what ages since last Sunday!" she thought. "How young I was last Sunday, and now I feel so old, so old! Last Sunday it was hot and bright. The sun shone. Uncle John took us to St. Paul's. How happy we were! Last Sunday I was sure Mac loved me! I thought of him in St. Paul's and thanked God! It was like being in heaven."

Her breathing came and went hurriedly, but no tears fell. Then a burning flush overspread her cheeks:

"I let him win me too easily! He saw from the first how much I cared for him! Lightly won; lightly lost! I dare say he even despises me for it now! I despise myself!"

And a thousand trifling words and acts rushing back to her mind filled her with shame; she would have given her life, she felt, to have recalled them, poor girl! And yet how simple, how innocent, how sweet those very words and deeds had really been!

It took her a long while to get away from

this sense of wrong-doing on her own part, but at last it was combated by the sense of injury and wrong-doing on Mac's part, which again was fought by a desire to defend Mac even from her own suspicions.

Her father had said Mac would be "a cad" to leave her so; and, in spite of all, Jessie felt that her father had used a word that never could, under any circumstances, be truly applied to Mac; even Alison, who had never cared for Mac, had declared he was the soul of honour. What then could have become of Mac?

So Jessie sat with her hand in her father's caress, and her head bowed on the sofa, ringing these miserable changes until about half-an-hour before Alison's return. By that time Arthur Bayliss had had a refreshing sleep, and had got thoroughly warm. He awoke in comparatively good spirits, and was able to leave the sofa for an arm-chair by the fire. It was one of those old arm-chairs that used to be so sacred in their owner's eyes. They were sacred, however, no longer, for their well-worn leather had given place to new, and their individuality was, for John Harbuckle, destroyed—gone for ever.

In one of these old arm-chairs Arthur Bayliss sat and smoked an excellent cigar. His cigars

were always most excellent; his beloved briar-root he reserved for his own room, rarely smoking it in company. Mrs. Bayliss liked his cigars; her Captain had been a great smoker; John Harbuckle, on the contrary, had a rooted aversion to tobacco in any form; and I am sorry to have to confess that his sister despised him for it; she had a contempt for men who did not smoke; they were not like James Bayliss.

"John, pray don't let Arthur know you hate tobacco! Poor, dear fellow, he seems to have forgotten it!" Mary Bayliss had already said, in warning tones.

But on this Sunday morning, as soon as Arthur Bayliss's cigar was fairly lighted (in which operation Jessie assisted), Mrs. James Bayliss, after she had brought one of her brother's very oldest and best beloved little *cloisonné* trays for the cigar-ash, had the good feeling to retire and to leave Jessie and her father alone.

Jessie's father drew her on his knee as soon as Mrs. Bayliss had gone, and put his arm round her waist.

"That suicide on Friday gave me an awful turn," he remarked; "I wonder how his wife and children feel this morning? Ugh!" shivering, "it doesn't do to think of it."

"Has he left many children?" asked Jessie, her great hazel eyes softening with compassion.

"Five!—eldest only nine!" returned her father, between whiffs that appeared to afford him genuine satisfaction.

"Poor little things!" sighed Jessie. It seemed to her at that moment as if she herself and all other bereaved women and children formed a section of humanity quite apart; quite separate from ordinary mortals who were not suffering special affliction.

"Jessie, child, you are not half glad I've come back," said Arthur Bayliss.

"I can't feel very glad about anything just now," said she, turning her head away sadly.

"Well, we must look for that fellow I suppose! Hasn't he relatives we can write to?"

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Jessie; "I'd sooner die ten thousand times over!"

"But I can't have you making yourself ill; I can't have you worried, you know. I can't stand it," said Arthur Bayliss. "You can't imagine what I feel when I see you looking so ill!"

"I—I—won't let you see me looking ill," said Jessie, with a painful flush. "Don't talk about it! Oh, pray don't talk about it!"

"Well, well, I won't, my darling! And look here, don't trouble yourself about my affairs;

they'll come all right. I'm not hurt by this panic; on the contrary, I've managed to fall the right side of the hedge. How would you like to go to Madeira with me next winter? I shall have to go somewhere warm! I can't stand this awful climate!"

"Next winter's a very long way off," said Jessie. "Perhaps I shall like to go—perhaps ——" and she broke down. "Perhaps I shall be in my grave by that time," she meant.

"Alison's late!" she went on, presently, rousing herself and glancing at the clock "Alison's a curious girl; don't you think so?" she asked, by the way of changing the subject.

"Aunt Mary's quite right!" said Arthur Bayliss; "Alison's a genuine Harbuckle! Don't you see the likeness between her and Ceres and the Shepherdess hanging up there? She's a genuine Harbuckle! I shall never take much interest in her! She's not one of my sort!"

"Never mind, uncle John is very fond of her. They get on wonderfully together! You have me to take an interest in, you know!" said Jessie, with a wretched attempt at vivacity. She turned her face a little aside as she spoke.

"There now! keep still!—What a likeness!" exclaimed her father, in a tone of genuine pleasure, passing the tips of his fingers lightly over her cheek and chin, and looking at her

with great admiration. "How strongly you remind me of a daguerreotype of myself as a very young man! Ah, now it's gone! You are my own! aren't you, darling? I saw myself, as I was once, in you just then."

"Yes, yes, I belong to you," and Jessie hid her head on his shoulder and cried a little, a very little; then, making a desperate effort, she drew him on to talking about Africa, a subject upon which if he were once fairly started it was not easy to stop him. Jessie listened, she heard him going on and on about natives, and palms nuts, and fevers, and silent rivers, but all the while it sounded like:

"For ever, together; together, for ever,"

Through Birrendale—never! Through Birrendale, through Birrendale—never! And so it kept chiming through her brain; until—

"At last!" she exclaimed, slipping off her father's knee; "at last there's Alison!"

"Poozie!" she said, "they're going to lay the cloth; you'd better be off to the drawing-room. You'll find a grand fire there, and also aunt Mary. I'm going to look after Alie."

"I'm not pining for aunt Mary's society," said Arthur Bayliss, who was reluctant to leave his comfortable quarters.

"But," said Jessie, taking hold of his arm,

as if to lift him up, and dropping her voice, and nodding mysteriously, "you'd better go to her, you know! she'll like you to go—that is, she expects attention, and wise people find it best to give it her. Aunt Mary and poor uncle Jim were very kind to me; what would have become of me, without them? Workhouse, I suppose!" and she shrugged her shoulders, and raised her eyebrows. "Oh, forgive me, forgive me! I didn't mean to say anything cruel! Please—please, let me go!"

She went to the top of the stairs to welcome Alison, as if that cousin of hers had been absent for at least a week. She was, I suspect, already longing—all unknown to herself—for a girl to speak to.

"Weel, ye're just a guy!" she exclaimed, dropping into the Birrendale intonation, as Alison appeared from behind the baize door.

"A guy, am I?" said Alison—(thinking, "I hope not; but there's one comfort, he would never notice it!)—"Neat, at any rate?" she asked, aloud.

"Oh, yes, neat; but what's neat?" asked Jessie, with much and undisguised contempt.

"Then never mind the rest!" said Alison; and, pausing on the stairs, she looked up at her cousin as if Jessie were a picture, and then said, with a fervent admiration as undis-

guised as Jessie's contempt, "You, madam, are looking very, very pretty! prettier than anything else I've seen since I've been out." Indeed, Jessie, standing there, the fire warmth still on her face and such light as there was falling from the window on to her russet head: Jessie, standing there at the top of the dark paneled stair-case before a back-ground of John Harbuckle's blue china and broad-leaved plants, was a very fair sight to see.

"That's not saying much! Everything must look hideous to-day," returned Jessie, for one brief moment pleased with the compliment. Then she turned away abruptly:

"What's the good of it? Mac's gone!" she felt in her heart; "I might as well be ugly!"

"Come upstairs at once, Alie," she whispered. "Don't let my father see you in those dowdy old things, he won't like them."

The two girls went upstairs.

"I've been into more than a dozen churches," said Alison, when they were in their own room.

"How thankful I am I wasn't with you!" returned Jessie.

"You are mistaken, you would have been very glad," said Alison, gravely; so gravely, that her cousin's own expression changed at once.

"You've seen him!" exclaimed Jessie, scanning Alison's face, every muscle of her own rigid with sudden tension.

"I have not seen him! I have seen Alec. Sit down in that easy chair! Don't look like that, dear, there's nothing to be frightened about."

"Oh, make haste! Make haste!" Jessie implored.

"You have been thinking very wrong thoughts about poor Mac," said Alison, taking a chair near Jessie's, and laying her hands with a gentle control upon her cousin's, as if to keep her from starting up. "I told you, Jessie, you were wrong about Mac; and so you were; and it appears that he has been thinking just as wrong thoughts about you. No, no, dear, sit still; I'll tell you as quickly as I can. You remember the theatre on Tuesday?"

"Yes, yes, ages ago. What of it?"

"He saw you; he was in the stalls!"

"Alison! Oh!" with a cry of despair; "and he saw my father?"

"Of course he did! Sit still! Sit still!" and Alison pressed her hands firmly over Jessie's.

"Where is he?" asked Jessie, trying to rise.

"In London. Alec says he is not very well

—nothing to be frightened about, he hopes; but——"

"He's dead!" exclaimed Jessie, the look in her eyes almost making Alison herself break down and cry.

"No, no! Jessie, he's alive. You are going to be brave, dear?"

"Yes! Oh go on!" cried Jessie, with piteous entreaty.

"He has met with rather a bad accident," said Alison. "On Wednesday morning he was coming here; he was obliged to go a little way with Mr. Donaldson first, a little way down the Strand, when an omnibus horse cast a shoe and struck him. Fortunately, it just spared the temple, so, it has happened, it is not so serious as it might have been."

"It might have killed him!—and I've been thinking such horrible things!" Oh, what am I to do? Why didn't you make Alec come in? I could have asked him questions! Oh! to think that Mac might have died while I was thinking those horrible thoughts about him! And he saw us at the theatre; and he has been wretched about me! What could he have thought?"

"I've made that right with Alec! Of course, as people in love never have any common sense, he at once jumped at the conclusion

that you were encouraging some one else, and was frantically jealous. However, Alec will settle that matter. They have come from Scotland to look after him. It will be all right."

"But I must see him this minute!" said Jessie, rising as if half mesmerised.

"Come, Jessie, come, come! you are going to be brave!" said Alison, soothingly, rising too, and taking her cousin's arm.

"Yes, yes. But I must get used to it first. It's so sudden!"—she pressed her hands against her forehead—"Alec can't be back there yet; can he be? He can't be with Mac yet?"

"Hardly yet. He was going to take a cab; he will be there very soon."

"And poor Mac still thinks I could flirt with someone else! How could he think so? How little he knew me!"

"Well, you know, it must have looked very much like it!" put in Alison.

"It must! So it must! And what wicked things I've been thinking, and Mac might have been lying dead all the while! I can't forgive myself. I've been too wicked!" cried Jessie, wandering aimlessly about the room.

"Oh! he may die. Supposing he shouldn't get well, I should hate myself for ever—for

ever and ever! I should never have any rest any more!"

"Oh, but he will get well," said Alison, "there's every reason to hope he'll get well very soon."

"But I must see him! When are they going to let me see him? Why didn't you make Alec come in? You never do the right thing," said Jessie, testily.

"Alec is going to write this evening. You can't very well call before you hear from them. Mother, no doubt, will go with you to-morrow."

"To-morrow! it's easy enough for you to say to-morrow; to-morrow's an age away—how am I to live till to-morrow?"

"I thought," said Alison, "you would have been thankful for anything rather than suspense."

"Don't you call this suspense? I wish you'd go away, you cold-hearted creature! I don't believe you're a human being at all."

"Very likely not; very likely not," said Alison, dryly, putting away her hat as she spoke.

"What do you mean by letting Alec go without my seeing him? I could beat you! I could beat you!" repeated Jessie, knitting her brows and clenching her teeth and hands.

Then she dealt Alison several blows.

"I asked him in. I asked him several times; but he was afraid of facing you! Come, be reasonable (do you know you really hurt me just now?), be reasonable, Jessie. How could I help it? Come, leave off beating me!" and Alison seized Jessie's wrists firmly.

"Reasonable!" cried Jessie, struggling in her cousin's grasp, "do you think I've no more heart than you have?—you stone! you icicle! Tell me every word he said! Begin at the beginning; don't leave out anything. You ought to have insisted upon Alec's coming in!" and Jessie, getting free, threw herself down on the bed, and listened, with all her faculties wide awake enough now, while Alison conscientiously began at the beginning and went straight through.

"If uncle John were only at home?" sighed Jessie, when Alison left off. "There are all of you in the house, and I just feel as if there were nobody here—nobody that's of any use to me now; you're all so unfeeling—so stupid! Uncle John would have gone off at once, and seen for himself how Mac really was! Oh he'll die! He'll die!"

"Not he," said Alison. "If the accident wasn't fatal at once, it isn't likely to be fatal at all."

Jessie turned away and was silent for a few minutes.

"Alie, I didn't mean to be so hard on you, you meant to do the best, of course," she said, presently, with a quaint little mixture of penitence and patronage.

"Oh, never mind me; that's of no consequence; I'm nobody; I have no feelings—nothing hurts me; indeed, I rather like to be insulted and beaten by you. Well, I'm going down to the others now. I must tell them, I suppose!"

"Yes, they'll have to know. Don't let any of them come up and worry. I'm getting all right, only it was so sudden. I do wish uncle John were at home! Alec was sure Mac was going to get well—quite sure? You don't look very certain. How I wish uncle John were at home! He has sense and feeling—nobody else has, you're all brutes, all of you!"

If only the "bird of the air that carries the voice" would have taken that wish to poor John Harbuckle then, pacing by the sad grey sea in a depressed and melancholy mood, how they would have cheered him! But I fear that bird of the air is a capricious fowl, much given to telling treasonable matters—such as the private cursing of a king or a rich man by the democratic grumbler—and thinking a

wish like Jessie's beneath his notice. The gulls cried with a noise like the creaking of fir trees in a storm; but "that which hath wings," the mysterious bird in the air, brought no crumb of comfort to John Harbuckle on that cold, dull Sunday, as he looked seaward, wondering with tender pity whether Jessie had yet heard of Mac, and feeling, not without a keen pang of jealousy, that Arthur Bayliss was in all probability at that very moment occupying one of his arm-chairs, beside his own sacred hearth.

"I can't rise to it," he said, dolefully. "I ought to be glad he's come back; but it's no use, I can't rise to it!" and he felt himself but a low and grovelling creature, as he slowly shook his grey head.

He had been singing, half-an-hour before this, with such voice as he had:

"Give me the wings of faith to rise,"

but he was only too conscious that he was still on an earth which just then presented to him a remarkable dull and leaden appearance.

Poor John Harbuckle! Could he but have known that Jessie had wished for him! But he did not know; he only felt that another man had taken possession of his home and of all the feminine hearts that beat therein. For once in his life, John Harbuckle felt very

nearly homeless; for what is home to any man of fifty unless he can himself reign supremely there?

Only a few moments could Jessie, lying on her bed in the old house in Trinity Square, give to anyone except Mac and herself. No sooner had Alison left her than all her heart cried out, while the most lovely rosy light beamed over her face:

"Oh, Mac! Then you do care for me after all? You haven't gone away. No, you care for me" (even to herself she was chary of the word, "love"); "you care for me, dear, you care for me! And I am very fond of you, I am indeed! If I could only see you!—if I could see you! Oh, Mac, you ought to have known I meant always to be good to you! Why did you believe your eyes? Why didn't you believe me? Oh, Mac! my dear! my dear! So you love me, Mac, after all!"

And Jessie, anxious as she was, felt that Mac would be obliged to get well for her sake; but she longed to see him with an unutterable longing that seemed as if it must break through all forms and all proprieties and go to him.

CHAPTER III.

HOW HE TOOK IT.

HOW Jessie Bayliss would have scorned the idea that on this earth there lived another human being to whom Mac Carruthers's life was of more vital importance than it was to her!

If we could possibly look at Jessie for a moment as a girl in whom we took no special interest (which is, of course, absurd), we might say, as we should of another girl under such circumstances:

"Well, if Mac should die, Jessie is young and pretty, and the thing that hath been is that which shall be; she may find another Mac, whose Christian name may be something else. It will be hard for her at first—but one consoles oneself for the departure of Ulysses, you know, even if he depart for the Better Land. We are not all so constant as Mary and John Harbuckle—(Mrs. James Bayliss was a Harbuckle; you remember)—and Jessie is, as we have said, young, pretty and *not* a

Harbuckle; for such as she there are always many lovers. Poor darling, we are sorry for her, but time is a great consoler, especially to youth."

This view, common sense almost to the point of being brutal, has, however, something that recommends it to the practical person; young lives *do* recover from very terrible blows; therefore I venture to hint, although Jessie (whom I would not hurt for the world) would never forgive me if she heard it, but I can depend upon its being kept from her, although Jessie, I repeat, would never forgive me the heresy—that at the very minute Jessie was longing to see Mac, with such feverish anxiety, there lived a man and a woman, a man and a woman to whom Love had come tardily, and to whom Mac's recovery—for which both were hoping with the profound gravity with which one watches beside the dying—was absolutely a matter of life and death.

The man was Donaldson of Langdyke; the woman, the patrician to whom he was engaged.

Love at twenty and love at thirty are two very different things. The woman who loved Donaldson of Langdyke was a noble woman, in character, position, everything; why she, who in her first youth had cared for no man,

loved him, no one could tell; but so it was, she loved him.

They were both very wealthy; they had no need to wait as poor creatures like Mac and Jessie must wait. As soon as they were engaged, Donaldson had hurried on the marriage arrangements; but a week or two before the appointed time (it was on the happy day that Mac and Jessie drove through Birrendale) she had found out that the man she loved was an habitual drunkard.

"I cannot marry a drunkard, we must part," she said, her heart crushed with a sense of loathsome degradation.

"Can you doom me to hopeless perdition?" he pleaded.

No, she could not; she held out hope. He swore to reform.

Then he met Mac, and Mac at once acquired a certain mastery over him. Donaldson felt he had put his life into Mac's hands; he clung to him as his last chance; he made a desperate effort at reformation. But Mac had been struck down by his side; the cry he gave, when he saw Mac fall, sounded, as he recalled it to mind, at once like a yell of despair and a fiendish shout of triumph at regained freedom.

On that dull, grey Sunday morning, when the leaden sky hung over all the South of

England, during the time that Alec Carruthers was driving from Trinity Square to the Strand, Donaldson of Langdyke was sitting by Mac's bedside, nervously pulling at his own sandy moustache. He had spoken a few words when he came in, but Mac had passed a bad night and had dropped off into an uneasy doze.

Mac's forehead was so bandaged that there was but little of it to be seen; the merry twinkle had faded out of the eyes, and those eyes were covered by lids that now and then twitched with pain. Mac's power to control even his own nerves was, for the time, gone.

So Donaldson of Langdyke sat by the bedside nervously pulling his own sandy moustache, while, poor wretch, two fierce passions fought for mastery over him.

He loved that woman who loved him with all the strength that was left to him. She was not far off, in twenty short minutes or so he could have been with her.

If Mac had been well he would simply have said, "Let us go," and they would have gone; Mac would have taken him safely to her, but now, with Mac lying there prostrate, he knew that to go to her was utterly and hopelessly impossible. Only so short a distance, and all his better nature craved piteously for a sight

of her, but he knew it was hopeless; the two warring passions were unequally matched, love was but a stripling in the strong grasp of his craving for drink; Heaven and Hell were nothing to him then. He saw her, as he sat there nervously pulling at his moustache by Mac's bedside; he saw her praying for him with strong crying and tears; he felt his own heart weeping over himself: he glanced at Mac's pale, sleeping face, the firm eyes that had controlled him were closed, and Donaldson rose up noiselessly and stole out of the room. But he never saw the woman who loved him that day, for so strong, so irresistible had been the craving that possessed him, that it seemed could he only have gratified it by trampling over her dead body or his own dead soul he could not have held himself back from it. And yet in his heart he wept for himself and his ruin.

Mac presently opened his eyes; Donaldson had gone. Mac understood what had happened.

"It's as well, perhaps, that I can't get up," said Mac, "or I might do the same! What's the use of anything now Jessie's false! How can I ever believe in truth and goodness again? And to dare to write so sweet a letter only the very day before! Why didn't that horse-shoe

kill me? I don't see the remotest use in living! Not the remotest! Not the remotest!" he repeated, and went over and over again with the same doleful iteration until the scene in the theatre, of which every waking minute was full, grew confused and then faded away once more.

After a while Alec came in. His mother was resting on the sofa in the hired drawing-room, his father was out.

Mrs. Carruthers would have been a good-looking middle-aged woman had her complexion been less rough and red than it was. She wore a simple black cashmere and a becoming lace cap.

"You're late, Alec!" she said. "You'll not have been to Crown Court then?"

"No, I've just been down to the City," returned Alec, with deliberation.

"To the City! On a Sunday!"

"Aye!" said Alec, extracting as much sound out of the syllable as a German gets out of his "So!" And then he paused, as if in uncertainty.

"You'll have been to Tower Hill?" asked Mrs. Carruthers.

"Aye!" ejaculated Alec, at even greater length, taking a chair as if he had a whole day to do it in.

"And you'll have seen some of those Bayliss people?"

"Aye!" assented Alec.

"Did you call at the house?" asked Mrs. Carruthers.

"I just met Alison Bayliss by chance," said Alec, with a slow sing-song intonation.

"You met her—and whay-ere?" asked his mother with half-a-dozen h's in the long-drawn "where."

"Just beyond St. Paul's," answered Alec, slowly and dutifully.

"And you had been to service at St. Paul's?" continued the cross-questioner.

"No," said Alec, "I was just wandering along, thinking of poor Mac. I was just wandering."

"And what had Miss Bayliss to say for herself?"

"She had been looking at churches and was going home, so I just went along with her," chanted Alec, innocently enough. "Is Mac awake, mother?"

"No, he'll be sleeping now."

"I have something to tell him," said Alec, with the same slow gravity with which he had spoken all along.

"You had better not agitate him yet awhile, he'll be needing rest, poor fellow!"

"I have some good news. It may quiet him."

"You'll have seen that Jessie Bayliss then?"

"No; but I saw Alison Bayliss, and we talked a little about the other one. Alison Bayliss is a very sensible girl."

"I wish they had never come to Birrendale!" said Mrs. Carruthers. "And you heard about the rival, Alec?"

"'Twas just a mistake!" said Alec.

"I'm sorry for that. I was hoping Mac was going to be rid of that Jessie Bayliss. It is not at all the match for him." Pause—rather a long one. "So there's no rival?"

"No, and she's in an awful way about him. May I see if Mac's awake?"

"You had far better leave him alone," said Mrs. Carruthers; but Alec went off without heeding the advice, and found Mac awake.

"Are you better?" asked Alec, looking down anxiously at his cousin.

"I suppose so," said Mac, with a restless movement; "there's nothing like not wanting to get well for making one recover."

"Then," said Alec, "if you're better, Mac, I'll tell you something."

And he drew the chair that Donaldson had left close up to the bed-side.

"Yes," said Mac, looking at him with a singularly wretched expression.

"You're just a fool, Mac," began Alec.

"That's no news, I knew that long ago," returned the wounded hero of the brae-foot.

"Aye, but it's true! I've had fresh proof of it this very morning."

"You've met them again?" asked Mac, with despair in his face—the "them" being of course the couple he had seen at the theatre.

"I've seen Alison Bayliss; I've spoken to Alison Bayliss. I hate talking to girls, but I talked to her, and did not hate it. She talks sense, that's more than her cousin does. We talked as we went along from St. Paul's to the Tower, and we came to the conclusion that you and Jessie were a couple of fools, and that we—that is, Alison Bayliss and I—were very sensible persons."

"She—Jessie's no fool!" exclaimed Mac, bitterly; "she's thrown over a poor man for a rich man; you don't call that folly, do you?"

"Well, you see, that's what she hasn't done," said Alec, with deliberate emphasis.

"Who's the man, then? He looked rich and prosperous," asked Mac, his pale face flushing crimson.

"The man is just a relative."

"She hasn't one."

"There you're mistaken; she has."

"Humph!" said Mac, incredulously, remem-

bering the lover-like attitude with which Arthur Bayliss had bent toward Jessie.

"Alison Bayliss was indignant at the bare suspicion of a rival; and she's the most sensible girl I ever met. I asked her point blank. I said, 'Has Mac a rival?' and she said, straight out, 'No.'"

"But I saw it with my own eyes!" said Mac; "if that man was a relative his manner was singularly unlike a relative's."

"I'd believe Alison Bayliss sooner than my own eyes," exclaimed Alec. "But then I'm a sane person, I'm not in love; you are, so you can't be expected to believe in Jessie."

"Go on!" said Mac; "what else did she say? Be quick, can't you!"

"Why, she said—and she was very angry when she said it—she said, Jessie fainted away dead in her arms, 'You can tell your cousin that, if you like,' she said; Jessie had been waiting for you ever since Wednesday, Mac! and it was on Saturday—yesterday—when this happened, that she fainted dead away."

"Fainted?" asked Mac, opening his eyes as widely as possible.

"Aye, fainted dead away," repeated Alec, and he paused and looked at Mac, who had closed his eyes and seemed for the moment

hardly conscious, as if he too were going to faint.

"I say, old fellow!" said Alec, growing frightened, bending over his cousin as he spoke.

"All right," replied Mac, after a long drawn breath. "You be off now, will you? Be off, sharp!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEETING OF THE MATRONS.

IN some ranks of life, getting married is one of the simplest things possible.

"How did you manage it?" I once asked a young woman, solely by way of extending my own knowledge of life.

"Well," said she, "he ses to me, 'have you e'er a young man?' 'Nerry a one,' ses I. 'No more have I ne'er a young woman,' ses he. So we kep company. Then one day he ses to me: 'Will you be my wife?' 'Yes,' I ses. So we got married—and that's all."

But idyllic simplicity is by no means attainable in the higher grades of society. Even such unimportant persons (from a social point of view) as Mac Carruthers and Jessie Bayliss were of necessity hampered by the opinions of many relatives.

Do not rashly suppose that because, owing to the fortunate intervention of Alec and Alison, Jessie and Mac now understood the steadfastness of each other's affection, that all was to go smoothly ever after.

Very far from it. Mr. and Mrs. Carruthers, of Muirhead, had their opinions—Mrs. James Bayliss had hers, Arthur Bayliss had his, so too had John Harbuckle: and the views of all these relatives were destined to influence the fortunes of Mac and Jessie very materially.

Alison, during Jessie's absence, told her mother and uncle of her meeting with Alec Carruthers. The incident, besides giving rise to an elaborate discussion, opened up the Birrendale connection in a manner almost too beautiful for Mrs. Bayliss to resist.

"I will take Jessie to call on Mrs. Carruthers the first thing to-morrow," observed Mrs. Bayliss, her mind full, not of Mac and Jessie, but of her own beloved Cauldknowe. "Oh, Arthur! How I wish you could have seen our Birrendale home as it was when dear James and I first went there! It was charming! An earthly paradise! James had such wonderfully good taste in everything! Why I remember very well that Mrs. Carruthers, on the occasion of her first visit, was perfectly astonished to see what we had made of our drawing-room. Ah! You never saw James's portraits! He had scarcely began to study Art in your time. Arthur—the rate at which he improved was marvellous! But then he was such a genius! Well, I'm glad on the whole, that Jessie will

keep up the Birrendale connection (I really don't think we need feel any undue anxiety about poor dear Mac); I am glad she will marry a Carruthers. I couldn't help feeling, when we came here, what a shocking thing it was that we were giving up the county families: that was one reason why I rebelled against it so much; and, indeed Arthur, I think (although I don't like to complain of John), but I do think it would have shown a much nicer spirit on his part if he had let us live on there. And you know, with our little pensions and all, it would have been but a trifling expense to him, and what a comfort to us?"

"These people—the young man's friends, they are on good terms with you then?" asked Arthur Bayliss.

"Oh, perfectly!—perfectly! Everyone of any standing in the whole of the Dale is! Of course poor James's position in the service was alone enough to ensure that! And I'm certain no set of people could have been kinder or more hospitable, nor have shown us more attention. Mac's uncle, the Laird of Muirhead, and I were always very great friends; indeed, I shall never forget the neat little speech he made when James showed him my portrait. Mrs. Carruthers was there, and (between ourselves) showed signs of jealousy.

She did indeed!" Mrs. Bayliss, seldom a talkative woman, was yet occasionally visited by a great exposition of speech. On that dreary Sunday she talked and talked until Muirhead grew the size of Abbottsford, and Cauldknowe was as eligible a family residence as any, short of baronial rank, north of Carlisle.

Mrs. Bayliss, I take it, looked forward to her visit of the next morning with an interest as keen, if far less intense and pathetic, as did her pretty niece, Jessie, when the poor child knew it had been arranged. As for Arthur Bayliss, the idea of his being mistaken for his daughter's lover distinctly pleased and amused him. The very first moment he was alone he walked straight up to the looking-glass, and surveyed himself with a satisfaction to which he had long been a stranger; feeling—alas! for only too brief a time!—that the weight of ten heavy years had suddenly fallen from him.

It was not until after some hours that this opportunity occurred, but I am inclined to think that this wish to see himself was the very first sentiment he entertained on the subject. It tickled both his fancy and his vanity that he had been taken for Jessie's lover.

The thought brought that pleasant and recognizable light to his eyes that always made him show to the best advantage. Mrs.

Bayliss was quite convinced that now dearest James was gone Arthur was the handsomest man left on this earth, and she treated him accordingly.

"I suppose I ought not to raise an objection to Jessie's engagement," was Arthur Bayliss's first remark, after hearing Alison's narrative (for his speech and thought did not go together always), "of course I ought not to object; but I should have been glad if Jessie could have remained disengaged for a year or two. I have been separated from her so long that I can hardly help being selfish enough to wish for her undivided attention for a little while. However," and he sighed, "that I have forfeited, as I have forfeited so much besides. I must say, though, the Birrendale connection, as far as the young man is concerned, doesn't look promising. If it could be broken off without hurting my dear girl too much, I should be just as well pleased."

It was some such observation as this that had called forth Mrs. Bayliss's oration on the merits of the match and on the glories of Muirhead and Cauldknowe.

In spite, however, of this interesting topic, that grey dull Sunday was a very long one. Jessie came down presently, but she added nothing to the fast diminishing stock of bright-

ness; for she scarcely said a word, and looked pale and wan.

Towards evening it became impossible for the little household in Trinity Square to disguise from themselves and from each other that it was indeed a long, long Sunday; longer than even the Scotch Sabbaths in Birrendale had ever been.

There was a feeling of being stranded, of being far above the tide of humanity that had ebbed out into the suburbs and had left the City and its few residents with little else to do but to wait for the returning tide.

On week days, during working hours, the City is a great centre of gravity; but on Sunday the magnetic attraction lies beyond the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction. Go where you will, do what you may, if you remain in the City on a Sunday you are always conscious that you are at variance with some organic law to which your happier fellow-creatures are loyally submitting. You are, you feel, where you ought not to be, where no one else is, and are consequently as restless as a needle under a magnet; you cannot get to your magnet, you cannot get comfortable, you cannot feel right; you want to yield to the attraction and run away from the City, but circumstances won't allow it.

If you are alone, you think of Robinson Crusoe; if your people are with you, you and they are the Swiss Family Robinson; but in both cases you are on a desert island where you can only *pretend* to be at home.

Naturally you go to bed early, how early you would on Monday hardly like to admit; if, as was the case with the Baylisses on that particular grey Sunday, you do not rouse yourself to attend evening service.

Arthur Bayliss managed to stay at Trinity Square until half-past nine, but the last hour was very trying to every one, they were all so sleepy and all of them yawned so terribly.

It was a relief to his family when they heard the heavy door close after him.

He was very affectionate to Jessie before he left. Of course she went downstairs to let him out, and he made her promise that she would not worry herself, but would go to bed at once and sleep all night long.

She assured him that she would, and fulfilled her promise by staying awake hours at a time, and by getting up and kneeling by the bedside and praying that Mac might not die. The "merry coster" was gaily spinning down to Billingsgate before Jessie really lost consciousness of Mac and his accident. Ah! poor

Jessie! On that morning she was in no mood for "hi-ing that gentleman," and begging him to take her for a drive in his flying cart, as she had been the first time she had awoke in London!

Poor Jessie!

"All her merry jigs were quite forgot!"

A weight of care had fallen upon her; a fear as if that unspeakable horror—Mac's death—had come near her. It had passed by, she hoped—but she shuddered to think how near it had come. It was wonderful to to her now, how people lived on, after those to whom they had given their hearts were gone. Her aunt, her father—they had loved and lost, but they could still live, and take their parts with their fellow creatures. She knew they had suffered much, yet they lived on, and sometimes even laughed, and were merry; but Jessie, as she listened to the clocks striking hour after hour, Jessie could not imagine herself alive, after Mac had left this world. It was a thing impossible; an idea too awful even for thought.

"You're sure Alec will have written?" she said to her cousin, as soon as she awoke. "Will he address the letter to you, do you think?"

"I should think so," returned Alison.

"They'll have come by now; shall I run down to the box?"

"No," said Jessie, "I'll go. If it's to you, you won't mind my reading it?"

"Certainly not; but you're tired, let me go."

Jessie, however, would go herself. She slipped on her dressing-gown, and stole down. It was early for the City (which is quite an hour later than the suburbs, having no trains to catch), the lower part of the house was still shut up. The letters were still in the box. She cautiously opened the little door and took them out. There were a great many. With trembling hands, and a heart sick with fear and hope, she looked through them. "Messrs. J. Harbuckle & Co.," "John Harbuckle, Esq.," two or three to names unknown to her, "care of Messrs. J. Harbuckle & Co.," "Mrs. Bayliss," "Miss Sarah Jane Smith" (the housemaid), more to John Harbuckle, Esq., more to Messrs. John Harbuckle & Co., one for Miss Alison Bayliss, but from a feminine correspondent. At last:

"Oh, it is!—it's Mac's—it's Mac's very own! Oh, dear, dear, dear Mac! How good of you to write! cried Jessie; and fortunately there was no one about to count how many kisses Jessie showered upon it, nor to see how eagerly

she read it through and gave it more kisses, and read it again.

It was unmistakably in Mac's hand, but was hardly, to quote John Harbuckle, "a fine example" of that hand. An hour afterwards, when what Jessie called her "jokesomeness" was making a shy little advance to come back to her once more, Jessie herself pronounced it "wobbly," which I take to be an adjective expressing shakiness.

It very nearly made Jessie cry when she first saw it; it looked ill did that note, poor thing!

It was only a few lines, literally, and not in the John Harbucklean sense, begging Mac's dearest Jessie not to be frightened; as now the pain in his heart was gone no doubt the pain in his head would follow immediately. He had suffered physically a good deal, he said, but nothing in comparison to the tortures that ought to have been his for having caused suffering to the sweetest girl in the world. All he required to make him quite well was to be assured by her own—several affectionate terms came in here—by her own lips that she had forgiven him.

Meanwhile he was her most loving and penitent Mac.

"P.S. and N.B.—There is really no cause for

anxiety about me now. Yesterday morning it was different."

Jessie flew upstairs with the softest, rosiest light on her cheeks, and threw her arms round Alison who was doing her hair at the glass.

"I'll go out prowling with you as much as you like, Alie! If you hadn't gone out prowling all this wouldn't have happened," she exclaimed.

"Then you're sorry you beat me yesterday, are you? Come, say you're sorry!" laughed Alison, kissing the top of Jessie's head.

"I'm sorry!" cried Jessie; "no, I'm not! I'm glad, ever so glad! I never was half so glad before! and you're a good old thing, that you are! Do marry Alec, I should be so happy if you'd only marry Alec! All I want to make me perfectly happy is that you should marry that good, dear Alec. He deserves you for being such a darling as to come wandering down here! Alison, say you'll marry Mac's cousin!"

"Rubbish! rubbish!—who's to take care of uncle John? Come, come, come, this won't do! Remember we're cookless."

"Will aunt Mary really go to see Mrs. Carruthers?" asked Jessie.

"Go! of course she will. She's longing for a gossip about Birrendale."

"Somehow I rather wish she weren't going," sighed Jessie, attacking her own plaits. "You know we have neither seen Mrs. Carruthers nor heard from her since Mac and I have been engaged. That will make it rather awkward, won't it? I'm always so frightened of these elderly people, they're so awe-inspiring."

"The Muirhead people always used to be very kind to us. Don't you remember the piece of salmon that so fortunately saved us from the ever-recurring haddie on the occasion of uncle John's visit?"

"Ah! but that was Mac, you know. I whiles ha' me doobts aboot Mistress Muirhead! Perhaps I'd better not go; perhaps I'd better let aunt Mary arrange matters first."

"Perhaps you'd better do no such thing," said Alison, with decision. "And perhaps you'd better make haste, because there'll be a good deal to do in the house before you go out to-day, Miss Jessie!"

Now Jessie had been given to understand that Mrs. Bayliss would call on Mrs. Carruthers in the morning, and by the morning she understood the fore-noon, that is, before twelve o'clock; but whatever might have been her aunt's original intention, as a matter of fact it was three in the afternoon before

Mrs. Bayliss and Miss Jessie Bayliss were announced to Mrs. Carruthers.

Mrs. Carruthers was writing letters at a well-worn Davenport in the hired drawing-room in Craven Street.

She put down her pen at once, and received her visitors with a nicely-balanced smile, expressive, she hoped, of due courtesy but no welcome.

Mrs. Bayliss, as she came up the stairs, which were but shabbily carpeted, had also been trying to assume a nicely-balanced smile, by which she wished to express a certain affectionate sympathy, blended with a certain pleasure at again meeting a representative Birrendale woman. She did not succeed very well, there was a degree of tentativeness about her expression and manner when she appeared ; and as for Jessie, she looked rather dazed and over conscious that she was in the presence of Mac's aunt.

They all, however, shook hands in an unnoticeable way, and then Mrs. Carruthers, with a little movement of her hand, invited Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie to places on the sofa, while she herself resumed her seat at the Davenport, where she sat quite uprightly.

"And how is poor Mac? We were so distressed to hear of his sad accident," asked Mrs. Bayliss.

"Malcolm will be better getting. He just needs rest and freedom from excitement and he'll be well again," said Mrs. Carruthers, taking up her knitting, a thick-ribbed stocking, destined to accompany her husband's shooting suit. Her hands were never idle a moment.

"It might have been a most serious affair," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"It might have been," echoed Mrs. Carruthers, knitting away with amazing celerity, and looking down at her work, although that was quite unnecessary, as she could have done it as well had she been blindfolded.

"Does she know that Mac and I are engaged?" thought Jessie, who was sitting on the corner of the sofa, feeling exceedingly uncomfortable.

"She must know; but her manner is quite different from what it used to be."

"And how is everybody?" asked Mrs. Bayliss, with a touch of gush in her voice and manner, making a desperate attempt to begin conversation.

"In Birrendale, will you mean?" asked Mrs. Carruthers, politely.

"Yes," returned Mrs. Bayliss, uneasily conscious of the want of reciprocity, "in dear Birrendale."

"Everybody is much as when you left," said

Mrs. Carruthers, turning her work as she began to use another needle.

"Our old friends, the Johnstones?" asked Mrs. Bayliss, resolving not to be beaten without showing fight. Jessie cast an anxious glance at her aunt, and perceived her colour rising; for herself she wanted very much to run away, only she wanted still more to hear about Mac.

"Poor Mac! (It's wicked of me, to call him Mac, I suppose she'd say, if he only knew I was here!) It's too bad! and I must see him!" she felt.

"Our old friends, the Johnstones?" asked Mrs. Bayliss.

"They returned early in June," replied Mrs. Carruthers.

"They are away a great deal."

"Far too much."

Then there was a dead pause.

"Our tenants at Cauldknowe? They seemed rather nice people," Mrs. Bayliss recommenced.

"So I have heard. I've not met them yet."

"And Mr. Baird?"

"He is about as usual."

"Maggie Baird has been ill?"

"She is still far from well, very far from well."

"Her chest is delicate," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"We fear it is," said Mrs. Carruthers.

"Do they give her cod liver oil?"

"Oh yes, by the gallon."

Then there was another long pause. To proceed with conversation seemed impossible. Jessie furtively put out her hand and touched the crape on Mrs. Bayliss's dolman, meaning, "Pray let us go."

Mrs. Bayliss understood the mute appeal of the little action perfectly, but she did not choose to go yet. What did Mrs. Carruthers mean by ignoring the widow of so distinguished an officer (in his widow's opinion) as Captain James Bayliss?

The fact was Mrs. Carruthers did not at all wish to ignore Mrs. Bayliss, she only wished to ignore the engagement between Jessie and Mac, and in all probablity had Mrs. Bayliss not spoken of Malcolm Curruthers as simple Mac, and in so doing assumed a sort of right to that young man, the behaviour of Mrs. Carruthers would have been less frigid.

"You think that your nephew is better, then?" presently resumed Mrs. Bayliss.

"Yes; he was able to get up this forenoon."

"That looks well. Then we need not feel any more anxiety for him."

"That would be quite uncalled for," said

Mrs. Carruthers, and her tone so plainly said, "Pray, what right have you to be anxious about my nephew at all?" that Jessie had hard work to keep back the question that rose indignantly to her lips:

"Do you, or do you not, know that Mac and I are engaged?"

Mrs. Carruthers knew perfectly well what was passing in Jessie's mind. She was conscious that she was giving her pain, and being naturally a kind hearted woman, she was sorry for her. But she felt she had a duty to perform, not only to Mac—who was only her nephew—but towards the much more important Alec, who on Sunday, for the first time in his life, had spoken of a girl, Alison Bayliss to wit, with something like interest.

"I've nothing to say against either of the girls," said Mrs. Carruthers to herself, "only it's a sort of thing that just won't do."

If, therefore, Mrs. Carruthers seems to you rather heartless, you must remember that she had two young men of her own to protect from the wiles of a penniless widow, and two penniless girls; if, in so doing, she had to hurt one of those girls, she was sorry; still duty is duty, and has to be done. Her brief sentences, as they here stand, perhaps hardly do her justice. She did not speak them harshly; far

from it, she spoke in her ordinary gentle sing-song, and accompanied them with her nicely-balanced smile; nevertheless those little sentences erected an impassable barrier between her and her visitors.

Jessie's hand was again furtively touching her aunt's crape, with a mute appeal for release from the torture, for truly it was little else to her, and Mrs. Bayliss was on the point of rising, when the door was opened, and in came no less a person than Mac himself, with a red bandanna bound round his forehead.

Jessie gazed at him with wide-open eyes, as if he were a ghost.

He went straight to her, took both her hands in his, and kissed her as fervently as if no eyes but his and hers had seen him do it.

"Jessie!" he exclaimed, with every bit of his heart.

"Mac! You are better, Mac?" and she looked up in his face with such sweet anxiousness that he felt it was well worth while to have met with that all but fatal accident.

"First tell me you forgive me," whispered Mac, inserting himself between Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie on the sofa, but with his face close to Jessie's all the time, "you forgive me?"

"Yes, dear," whispered Jessie, too fright-

ened and pleased and altogether beside herself to think of the others.

"Then I'm right again," said Mac. "Mrs. Bayliss, have you taken the trouble to come up to inquire after me?—that's really very good of you."

"Mac, have you gone mad?" asked Mrs. Carruthers, before Mrs. Bayliss could reply; "you know the doctor said you needed quiet."

"Aye," said Mac, quite unabashed, "but I needed a sight of my Jessie far more."

Then, to make matters worse, Alec must come in and seem quite delighted at finding Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie there.

Mrs. Carruthers resolved to return to Muirhead without delay.

Of course Mac and Jessie had a great many things to explain to one another, but there was no chance for them that day, for there sat the two matrons, each smiling a dangerous smile, and each apparently as ignorant of the feelings of an engaged couple as if neither of them had ever been young in all her life.

But Mac was equal to them, wounded and suffering as he was, he was equal to them; in a minute or two he had recovered from the first excitement of seeing Jessie, and had plunged into an amusing recital of what, in reality, was a most disastrous affair. He and

Alec had hardly been five minutes in the room before three of the little company were laughing quite merrily.

Mrs. Carruthers smiled and smiled, and went on with her knitting.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE BOSOM OF HIS FAMILY.

TOWARDS the end of the week in which the matrons met, the dismal weather culminated in a curious orange-brown day. On that day the whole of London looked so like a painting by a very old master that it was difficult to believe it was not on canvas. In every open space, in Fenchurch Avenue, for instance, a symphony in brown was in progress, beginning near the ground in a key-note, so to put it, of the very deepest, most intense tone, and working upwards, through perfect but almost imperceptible gradations, to the tawny zenith where the mid-day sun was in vain trying to penetrate the semi-opaque clouds.

From an artistic point of view this day was not without its merits; but Arthur Bayliss stood at his door-way for an instant and shuddered at it.

"Heavens! what a climate!" he said; "if this is July what will November be? I shan't be able to stand it. I shall have to go. Ugh!

ugh! ugh! How the cold is running down my spine!"

And he retired to his office fire, where he was speedily joined by Mr. Tildesley, who, having just made a considerable loss, was in a state of mind sufficiently depressing; but Arthur Bayliss rather liked a good growl on such a day.

The symphony could be well observed from the house on Tower Hill; but there it was accompanied by a constant boo-oo-oohing from the fog horns on the river, a never-ceasing shrieking of railway whistles, and the excruciating voice of the last invented steam Syren, or "American devil," and such damp clamminess on chairs, tables and walls that really, to most people, life there would, indeed, hardly seem worth living.

Singular to relate, however, Mrs. Bayliss, who was, it must be owned, rarely in tune with her fellow-creatures, was, on that orange-brown day, when most other people were so wretched, in an exceptionally happy temper.

One cause of that good temper was, that she had that morning received a note from her brother, John Harbuckle, in which he informed her that he might be expected home about five o'clock that afternoon.

"I told you," he wrote, "that a week at the

sea-side would kill me. I have been obliged to stay here five days; I leave you to imagine the deplorable condition to which I am now reduced. I shall require the tenderest handling on my return. The treatment to which the ivories found at Nimroud were subjected might perhaps be useful in my case: they had to boil them in isinglass before examining them, so fragile were they. I feel almost as fragile."

"Serve him right!" said Mary. "He wouldn't take *us* to the sea-side. Really it seems like a judgment!"

But Mary Bayliss was glad in her heart that her brother was coming back: not that she was so particularly pleased with the idea of seeing him again as that she hated a house without a man in it.

Of course, she never admitted this to her masculine relatives, what woman ever did?—because, as we all know, men are conceited enough without being told such things, and never ought to be flattered; but to her a house appeared unfurnished without a man in it. She could, and, what is more, she did, at times neglect or snub her men cruelly, when she was out of temper with them, or thought that they required stern discipline, but there was nothing on earth she really

enjoyed so much as looking after them thoroughly well.

She had parted with her brother very coldly indeed; still, although there had been Arthur Bayliss to fuss about, she had often felt that she missed her other man—the one who stayed. Arthur Bayliss had many attractions, but he went; he rarely took more than one meal with them. Do you know that, as I write this, I almost tremble for the widow's constancy to the memory of the late lamented Captain James Bayliss! That, however, is a contingency too horrible to contemplate. I won't contemplate it.

Mrs. Bayliss was just then in domestic difficulties; she was a woman capable both of creating difficulties and fighting them when created.

The present difficulty was that Mrs. Robbins was now without a successor, or, to put it plainly, Mrs. Bayliss was without a cook. This made it necessary for the girls and Mary to turn to and carry out their own orders, and added so much to the happiness of the household, that, in spite of the symphony and the Syrens, Alison and Jessie sang at their work, or laughed and chattered, and were very merry; the remembrance of Mrs. Carruthers and her knitting notwithstanding.

But then Jessie had had a very nice note from Mac that morning, in which Mac wrote that he hoped soon to be able to get down to Trinity Square, and have a little turn in the Tower Gardens.

By the train he had specified John Harbuckle arrived in town, to find, although it was early in the afternoon, that gas was burning in all the shops.

John Harbuckle's delight at again being in his dear City was so great, that, although he had with him a small portmanteau, he set out from the station on foot, for the purpose of enjoying the walk home, or, as one might say, with perhaps greater accuracy, of walking through his home; so familiar and so beloved was the City to him, and so very much his own.

The pleasure he took in the details of all he saw was a source of very real pleasure to him. From a fresh notice on the hoardings to the opening of a new house, which had been finished during his absence, everything was full of interest to him.

He had gone some little distance when St. Paul's struck four.

"Ah!" he said, with a slightly regretful sigh, "he'll be round soon; I should like a

quiet hour before he comes! Better take a cab."

He did so.

"I wonder if Mary's forgiven me yet," he said, as he is driven off. "On the whole, I get on better with Mary than I could have expected; but she always was a trifle difficult—difficult and uncertain. I don't think she quite appreciates Alison, and that rather annoys me. I don't mean that she isn't fond of her, of course she is very fond of her, but she would rather, I think, that Alison wasn't quite so like her grandparents and was more of a Bayliss. Now to me there's a certain pleasure in seeing in her, just for an instant, the passing likeness of my father, or now and then of my mother; once or twice, even, I have seen a likeness to my grandfather and to my little dead sister quite distinctly; very interesting to me, this. I hope the girls are all right. All this worry has been rather too much for Jessie, I'm afraid; I hope it's over. I'm very fond of Jessie—of both the dear girls. I wonder sometimes how I lived so contentedly without them. I hope they'll all like my little offerings. I'm not quite sure about that jet brooch for Mary. Really, it's bitterly cold for July! How the trees have suffered! How glad I am to be at home! I do trust Mary will like the

pattern of her brooch!—I should like to have done right for once, but I'm never certain about Mary."

At length, in spite of a terrible block in Eastcheap, he managed to get to Trinity Square.

He alighted. His door stood open; he went into his office, where his old clerk was putting away the books, spoke to him for a few minutes, read his letters, wrote an answer to one that required immediate attention, then went upstairs and gently opened the dining-room door, not without a secret nervousness and an indefinite anxiety.

But what a sight met his bewildered eyes! There was the table laid out, by no menial hands, for the highest of high teas; every bit of china that he had given to Mary and the girls turned to account in the most surprisingly delightful manner; his blue pots and aspodistræ on the sideboard, and, better than all, the dear girls themselves—who had never heard the cab, because of the traffic outside and their own activity within—the dear girls, flying towards him with outstretched arms; and, more wonderful still, Mary, his sister, approaching with a good-humoured smile, evidently with intent to kiss! It was too much!

"Why!—why!—why! Dear!—dear!—

dear!" stammered John Harbuckle. "Really now, really; I'm quite unprepared!—quite unprepared! This is, indeed, too much. Let me sit down! I shall faint!"

Then, there was nothing to be heard but:

"Oh, uncle John! what a time you've been gone!" "Oh, uncle John! don't you feel ashamed of yourself for not taking us?" "Look at Jessie's oat-cakes!" "Look at Alison's dropped scones! Look at your Wedgwood tray!" "Come and get warm!—aren't you frozen?" "Why!—why!—why! Dear!—dear—dear!—is that chair by the fire for me? Well! this is luxury! What a Mormon I am!" "Don't talk like that, sir!" "Oh, hasn't it been a strange day?" "And what do you think, uncle John, I went into twelve churches last Sunday morning!" "And Mrs. Robbins's department has lost its head again!" "And tea's quite ready, and"—"Really!—really! Let's see what's in my bag!" "Oh, charming! lovely!—the very thing I wanted!—a jet brooch, too!—and I broke mine this very morning! What a coincidence!" "Do you really like it, Mary?" "I've been wanting that particular pattern all life! John, you certainly *do* know a good thing when you see it!"

Can you wonder that men are the creatures we know them to be when their women folk

persist in burning incense to them in this—to use no harsher term—foolish and injudicious fashion? Verily women have much to answer for!

If it had been possible to have spoiled John Harbuckle, he must inevitably have been ruined, totally ruined, that evening!

For a whole hour he had the undivided attention of three devoted women (is there anything on earth the domestic man enjoys so much?) and was happy; so happy, that his happiness seemed almost more than he could grasp; so happy, that thanks to his Maker for letting him know such happiness welled up continually in his grateful heart and softened all his being.

He had one whole hour's start of Arthur Bayliss. He made good use of it.

When the illustrious Arthur Bayliss arrived, his heart, already heavy enough, was smitten with envy and jealousy; and he fancied, being in a state of body and mind when he could fancy an absurdity, that no one wanted him; but that even Jessie's welcome was forced and unreal.

They had finished tea and were all gathered round the fire; John Harbuckle in the great arm-chair, with one of the girls on each side of him, and Mary opposite, the old bachelor

looking as if, indeed, in the bosom of his family and almost patriarchal.

Arthur Bayliss went up to his daughter and gave her a listless wearied kiss. He felt a horrible pang of jealousy.

"Well, Bayliss, how are you?" asked John Harbuckle, stretching out his hand in welcome; he could then afford to be extra kind, he addressed Bayliss in an easier tone than he had yet used to him.

"I'm just alive, that's all," returned Bayliss, gloomily. "You got her off, I suppose?" he added, taking a chair beside Mrs. Bayliss.

"Got her off this morning," returned John Harbuckle, and began a recital of his sufferings during the last week at Deal, and of the trouble he had had with the damaged ship.

But King Arthur's arrival put an end to the sole reign of King John, two of whose subjects at once contemplated the transfer of their loyalty: Mrs. Bayliss making fresh tea for the new sovereign, and Jessie preparing to take her chair from beside John Harbuckle's to the opposite corner, as soon as she could do so without too roughly wounding the feelings of the late autocrat.

Jessie, moved by a delicate feeling of consideration for the deposed monarch, remained where she was for a few minutes; and once,

thoughtlessly enough, laid her hand on the arm of John Harbuckle's chair, to the intense disgust of Arthur Bayliss.

The two men were just then talking about the weather, on which subject Bayliss held most definite views; when Bayliss, after declaring that the climate was killing him, became so annoyed at seeing Jessie still by John Harbuckle's side that he could not help exclaiming:

"Why will you wear that bird's nest over your eyes, Jessie? For heaven's sake put it up; it makes me ill to look at you! She really is a sensible girl," he went on, addressing the others, "that makes it the greater pity she should disfigure herself as she does. She'll be blind one of these days."

Jessie put up the straggling ends of her hair, laughing, "There, father, will that do?" But she thought she would not be in any very great hurry to go to him, and allowed her aunt to pass him his tea; which unfilial conduct afflicted her father very deeply and made him feel that he was not wanted and had better go away.

"I think I'll go down into the office and do a little work," said John Harbuckle, rising; "I make it a rule not to attend to business of an evening; but I've been getting into arrears

during my absence; I must write some letters."

"May I come with you," said the loyal Alison; "I'll bring a book and be quiet, I'm so fond of the office."

"Thank you, my dear," said John Harbuckle, and he and his niece at once retired.

"The ridiculous manner in which you women fuss about a man when you have him all to yourselves!" exclaimed Arthur Bayliss, contemptuously, as the occupants of the three remaining chairs drew them nearer to the fire.

"I dare say it's foolish, Arthur," said Mary Bayliss, with a sigh that was not quite all sad, "but you see it's what I've always been used to doing. If dear James was away for a day or two we always welcomed him back with a little festival; didn't we, Jessie?"

"We did; and we had a grand one for you, father," said Jessie, "it cost us our cook. Her affections were in the military, and it was her evening out."

"That's no loss; I can't help feeling that when a man's been out all day, especially such a day as this, he requires a little attention when he comes home," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"He does, indeed!" said Arthur, with a reproachful sadness, meant to bring Jessie to

repentance. "What then must he require after an eight years' absence?"

Fortunately, before Mrs. Bayliss could reply, Sarah Jane called her away, leaving the unanswered question with Jessie.

Jessie, conscious that her father was trying to work upon her sympathies, gave him the benefit of her profile, and gazed thoughtfully into the fire without replying.

Her father looked at her with a sorrowful kind of anger, directed, he fancied, not against her, but against fate and circumstance.

"I've no right to complain, I've forfeited all such right," he said; "but it's hard to leave one's daughter when her mind is a pure little mirror, reflecting only her parents' thoughts, and to come back and find that mind filled with other images. Is is hard, but I suppose quite natural, that when one returns one should find one's own image—and that of the one that was dearer even than oneself—if not quite effaced, at any rate pale and blurred, and crossed and recrossed by lovers and aunts and cousins and—h'm!—adopted uncles"—this with an angry sniff and sneer.

"You don't mean to say you're jealous of poor uncle John?" asked Jessie, turning full upon him with a quick movement, her parted

lips curving, her hazel eyes dancing with suppressed laughter.

"Jealous! Pouff!" exclaimed Arthur Bayliss; "I'm not quite a fool, Jessie. I know I'm only one of a crowd now; once I reigned supreme in a woman's heart, but that's a long while ago, I don't expect to do so again; yet I think my daughter might spare me a little more of hers. But I suppose it can't be helped. I almost wish I'd stayed out and died by my African river, I could hardly have felt more lonely than I do here."

"Father! is that quite kind of you to say so?" asked Jessie, with a touch of pain in her voice. "No one can be to me what you are; no one else can share with me the memory of my childhood, even Mac can't do that. I can't be a baby over again, you know, Poozie." The grave tenderness that stole into her words touched him very much, he drew her on to his knee and she laid her head down on his shoulder.

"Darling child!" he said, kissing her hair; "the saddest part of the business is that we can never speak together of that past nor of her who made it what it was."

"I dreamed of her," said Jessie, softly, without raising her head, "I dreamed of her one night at Cauldknowe, and she looked so

peaceful and so happy, and smiled as if she loved us both so much."

"Ah! my darling, don't speak of her," said Jessie's father; "she never comes to me with a smile."

"It was the night of the 7th of April—I remembered afterwards it was on the 7th of April—a long while ago that——"

"It was on the 7th of April I returned, Jessie. Never mention that date again."

They sat quiet for a few minutes, and then Jessie asked:

"And have you made a great deal of money again to-day?"

"Not a farthing."

"Then don't you think I had better tell Mac about—about Arnold Birkett? I can't keep secrets from Mac; I'm sure we may depend upon him; and, do you know, I half suspect Mrs. Carruthers must have heard something, her manner was so changed."

"Tell him by all means; I don't want my daughter to marry under false pretences; indeed, I would infinitely rather she did not marry at all just yet."

"She will not for ever so long. Her dear old Poozie will be quite tired of her, long before she goes."

Meanwhile, John Harbuckle, followed by

the loyal Alison, had gone into voluntary exile.

It was so chilly in the office that Alison was obliged to fetch a shawl for herself, and to insist upon uncle John's putting on his great coat.

They went on steadily for nearly an hour, John Harbuckle at accounts and letters, Alison at entering extracts from a volume she was reading into her note-book; for Alison was a great collector of odds and ends of information, and was never satisfied if a day went by without some little addition to her stock.

Uncle John looked up once or twice at Alison, as she sat perched on one of the high stools, scribbling away very diligently, with the light falling on her neat little head; for neat it was, in spite of Miss Jessie's sneers and her own haunting sense of untidyness.

"Do you think that I, too, ought to be doing accounts?" she asked, noticing that he was looking at her.

"You do accounts! Certainly not."

"That's right; because I never could be taught to calculate. Six times three is almost beyond my powers."

"Accounts! I should think not; you have something better to do, my dear."

"Have I? What is that better thing?"

"Have you written that poem about the 'Street of the Little Sisters?'"

"Jessie says the Minories are really too ugly."

"Jessie doesn't understand the beauty of association as you do, my dear." John Harbuckle had finished his last letter when he made this remark; he turned round and surveyed his niece, resting his elbow on the desk, and his head against his hand.

"Seeing you sitting there, Alison," he said, "reminds me of Woolcomb and his wife. Many years ago they were very poor; he was only a clerk in the firm of which he is now the principal, and in those days clerks used to have to work late. Woolcomb was often kept at the office until ten o'clock, and his wife would come down of an evening—for Woolcomb had the place to himself—and make him tea, and sit by him. Then when work was over they used to walk back together to the City Road, and both of them have often assured me those were the happiest days of their lives."

"Then they don't believe in people waiting until they're ever so rich?" asked Alison.

"Well, that entirely depends upon the kind

of people, you know," said John Harbuckle with a smile.

"Mac and Jessie, for instance."

"Jessie would make a poor man an excellent wife, I've no doubt. So she beat you on Sunday, did she? Funny little girl!" and John Harbuckle's smile deepened.

"It was really too pretty!" exclaimed Alison. "But it was as much as I could do to keep myself from laughing outright; I had to do so, you know, because of Jessie's feelings, which I didn't want to hurt. And oh! I forgot to tell you before, but what do you think she said? Her contempt for all of us then in the house was as undisguised as it was unbounded; all she could exclaim was, 'Oh! I do wish uncle John were here! Why isn't uncle John here?'"

"You don't mean it! you really don't mean it!" cried John Harbuckle, his kind blue eyes opening to their fullest extent with astonishment and delight. "You really don't mean it!" he repeated, and with these words, John Harbuckle actually blushed; he did indeed, he was nearly fifty-four, but he blushed.

CHAPTER VI.

ON A SATURDAY MORNING.

FINE weather came back coyly; the light, vaporous clouds that hung above the Tower and the mists that clothed here and there its grey walls, seemed to belong to Spring rather than Summer. In another sense, fine weather returned coyly to our Jessie.

Mac was a good deal worse for his exertions on the day the matrons met, but by the end of a fortnight all anxiety on his behalf had subsided; he was about again and sufficiently himself to resist being taken to Birrendale by his relatives when they departed.

On a certain Saturday morning, the third after Mac's accident, Jessie received a note in which Mac promised to come down to Trinity Square at some time during that day.

Jessie was consequently in very great spirits; she could not help being so, for she had not yet had a really good talk to Mac since the

accident, and she was enjoying the reaction after her late anxiety. There was truly a lurking uneasiness about one or two things; the behaviour of Mrs. Carruthers and the Arnold Birkett unpleasantness, to wit; but in spite of these things the thought of that long and uninterrupted talk she was anticipating made her run about the house with quicker steps than ever.

The domestic difficulty had been overcome, Mrs. Robbins's department was no longer headless, the innumerable curiosities in the drawing room and the plants in the blue pots were all that now required Jessie's care.

She had dusted the drawing-room, and was giving the thick-leaved plants in the great blue pots the good sponging they so much needed, when there was a ring at the bell, and the neatest of Sarah Janes who ever wore cap and apron went down the few stairs in front of the landing, where Jessie was at work, to open the baize door.

Now it was so ridiculously early that Jessie never thought of connecting that ring at the bell with any visitor at all, much less with Mac Carruthers; who, for a wonder, had just slipped out of her thoughts.

Her fingers were wet and grimy, for the Smoke and Fog Committee had not then banished soot

from the neighbourhood of Trinity Square, and the leaves of the variegated plant she was sponging had suffered much during the last few days and were very grubby; she was just on the point of calling out to Alison that a favourite pot of lycopodium she had been looking at a minute or to before was on its last legs, poor thing, when she heard a well-known voice asking:

"Is Miss Jessie Bayliss at home?"

"Mac at this time of the day!" exclaimed Jessie, and fled into the dining-room, conscious of her grubby hands.

In another moment there was Mac actually coming up the stairs.

Mac walked straight into the drawing-room, and as he entered he caught sight of a looking glass above the mantel-piece, in which looking-glass he saw a girl's face peering cautiously round the edge of the opposite door.

Mac, without a word of warning, turned suddenly, intercepting the abigail who was about to shut him in, walked past, and all but stumbled over the tray and bowl of water Jessie had left on the floor, and went into the dining room, where whom should he find but that very same girl whom he had seen peering round the door!

"Ah! There you are, now I've caught you!" he exclaimed.

But the catching was metaphorical for a moment or two, because Jessie retreated before him until she came against the curtain of the furthest window.

There was no further running away possible, Mac followed her up, and Jessie, radiant with happiness and blushes, laughed out merrily:

"Look at my hands! They're just one mass! I've been sponging the plants."

"I saw you looking round the door!" exclaimed Mac, seizing both the grubby little hands with a mighty grasp; "now I'm going to pay you out!" which he did in the fashion most orthodox (so I suppose) among engaged people.

"You have come very early, Mac," presently said Jessie.

"Too early?"

"No, not too early," said Jessie. "How is the bad place getting on?—you have it still strapped up I see. I hope it's not hurting you."

"Oh, it's healing grandly," said Mac, lightly. "I daresay it will leave an ugly scar; but, you know, I haven't undertaken to supply the beauty, that's your business. It seems such an age since I had a word with you that I

thought I'd like a good long day. But I can go away for an hour or two if you are not ready. Only I've so much to talk about that if we don't begin in good time we shan't get through with it."

"So much?—what about?" asked Jessie.

"A good deal about ourselves and something about other people."

A little shadow crossed the brightness of Jessie's face; such a shadow as sometimes passed over the clear ripples of the Birrenwater in summer time.

"They have heard of Arnold Birkett," she thought.

But Mac threw himself back in his chair and laughed a ringing hearty laugh.

"Ha, ha! they've all gone back to Muirhead! they wouldn't let Alec stay another day in town after the poor fellow happened to say, innocently enough, that he was just wearying to see the Tower, so they packed up and went by the very next mail. See what comes of being an only son and heir! It's almost better to be a free and penniless nephew, isn't it? *I was* amused! it tickled my fancy so! Poor old Alec, he didn't half like it! He'd have liked to come down here with me to-day."

"You don't mean to say that Alec has taken a fancy to Alison? I'd jump to the top of the

Monument if I thought so!" exclaimed Jessie, laughing too.

"For heaven's sake don't go and spread such a report unless you want to banish us both from Birrendale for ever! Alec only said he thought your cousin was a very sensible girl and that he talked to her; it was rather a great deal for him to say, because he never talks to girls. But pray don't repeat it, or we're lost to Muirhead for ever."

"Don't care if we are," said Jessie.

"Don't Care came to a bad end;" said Mac, reprovingly.

"Well, I may go and wash my hands, mayn't I?"

"I'll give you three minutes by the clock; not a fraction more! But mind, not a word to Alison! as they say on the stage!" said Mac, holding up a warning fore-finger with a would-be melodramatic action.

Jessie flew upstairs, nearly knocking her cousin down on the landing:

"Ha! Ha! I know something!" the wicked child cried out, gleefully.

But Alison, who was mentally rushing after a line for her "Street of the Little Sisters," which was trying to escape her grasp, only said:

"I daresay you know a great many things; you're so clever you know!"

"You unsatisfactory being!" cried Jessie, giving her cousin a good shake. "However, as I've only three minutes to sort myself in, I'll put off the telling!"

"Very well," assented the unaroused Alison, calmly, counting syllables on her finger.

And in three minutes Jessie flew down again.

"How serious you're looking?" said Jessie, as she re-entered the dining-room, where Mac was sitting, shading the great black patch on his forehead with his hand; "that place pains you still, I'm afraid."

"A little—nothing to speak of. Was I looking serious?" and he took his hand from the black patch.

"Yes," said Jessie, a little anxiously. "You don't look like your brae-foot self one wee bit!"

"Well, you know," said Mac, as if with an effort, "life isn't all champagne and billiards, or even all fishing in the Birren!"

He paused, looking up at Jessie, who had taken her favourite seat in the window-settle, with a certain thoughtfulness unusual with him.

Jessie looked down, played nervously for a moment with the fringe of her dress, and then said, haltingly:

"You have heard something about me—

not about me myself, something about my family?"

"Oh, the relative you were with at the theatre!" said Mac, quite easily; "I ought to have abased myself more deeply—but, you remember, Jessie, you said at once, you dear child, that you forgave me. You forgave me so frankly I hardly dared to ask you again, for fear you should think I didn't believe you. You do forgive me, don't you?"—and he bent towards her—"you do, don't you? Because, if you don't, I'll order in some more dust and ashes."

"Oh yes, of course I do; don't let's speak of it again," said Jessie, with a little smile that faded quickly and left a painful straightness about her sweet lips. "You know, Mac," she said, her voice sinking with each word, "you know, I am never going to keep any secrets from you, dear."

"You darling!" exclaimed Mac, with fervent tenderness, drawing his chair close up to the window and Jessie; "I *couldn't* keep one from you if my life depended on its keeping!"

"I am going to tell you something;—it is difficult to tell—but——"

"Oh, never mind!" said Mac, touched by the look of distress in her face; "Don't tell me, then, I don't want to know."

"But I must tell you; and when I've told you you are to do just what you think right about it, and not to take me or my feelings into consideration at all, not in the very least.—I think I'd better give you up, Mac!"

"Give me up! What's happened now? Well, let us hear this dreadful secret then. What is it? Your hair is all false? Something of that, I suppose!" Mac tried to laugh, but it was a rather dismal failure.

"You are mistaken in me; I was mistaken in myself—you thought that I was an orphan, I thought so myself, but I'm not," said Jessie; "my father has come back."

"It was your father, then, I saw you with?" asked Mac.

Jessie nodded.

"You don't seem over-pleased. Is he going to object to me?"

"No," said Jessie, "no; of course he sees he must take things as he finds them—but perhaps you may object to him."

And then in broken sentences and with eyes dimming now and then with tears, Jessie told him all she knew of her parents, of her own early days, of her father's return; and of Arnold Birkett.

Mac listened gravely. The latter part of the narrative was unpleasant to him; he was

utterly unused to being mixed up with anything that was not of the most correct; he rebelled inwardly against Arnold Birkett.

"You don't like it," said Jessie.

"No, I don't," returned Mac, almost bluntly.

"If I had known it before we came here, when we were in Birrendale, I should not—I think I should not have let you fish at the brae-foot. Perhaps, if we tried very hard, we might some day forget about Birrendale, mightn't we, Mac?" asked Jessie, very softly and sadly.

"I never forget," said Mac, with decision, and paused. "But why are we wasting time?" he added, rousing himself. "What you have told me can make not a shade of difference to my feelings for you, and I hope it will not in yours for me. Silly child!" he went on, "do you think I'm going to give you up again when I've only just found you? Give you up, indeed, not for all the fathers and uncles and aunts between here and John o'Groats!"

"I half meant to run away from you, Mac," whispered Jessie, the coziest little bit of a smile creeping along her lips, until it nestled in the corners, although there was one big tear that had escaped from under her drooping eyelids slowly coming down each cheek.

Mac was obliged to leave the arm-chair and sit beside Jessie on the window settle, and say a great many kind words to comfort her.

"I am very glad you like me, Mac," presently said Jessie, humbly; "I like to be liked; and especially I like you to like me."

"Like me! Liking's a poor word for what I feel for you! I wonder if there has been one moment since that day on which we drove through Birrendale, and a good while before it, when I haven't thought of you and loved you with all my heart, and when I—fool that I was—felt I'd lost you—Oh, Jessie!"

"Oh, Mac!"

Then there were words that need not be put down here.

The good old sun, that had been trying all the morning to get a peep of the great City, came out from the fleecy clouds, and looked in at those two young people, sitting side by side, the good old sun that has seen so many a *replica* of that little picture before!

There those two sat, now and then unconsciously lifting their eyes to the gardens that covered the site of the old Aceldama, but seeing them not; there they sat, while the time went by in whispered talk, under the very eyes of the stately Roman-nosed Shepherdess, and the bespangled goddess Ceres, the Lord

Mayor, with his collar of state, and all the other portraits that hung on the walls of what used to be John Harbuckle's den.

Not the first of such scenes that those portraits had looked down upon by any manner of means! Once, another Jessie had sat in that same cushioned window-seat, listening to another young man, and had been happy with him, too, before the arrival of young Arthur Bayliss.

By that very window the goddess Ceres—but without her spangled veil and wheat-ears—had worked at her tambour-frame morning after morning, as a certain masculine person, who passed that house every day on his way to the Customs knew very well.* So that neither Ceres nor the Shepherdess and her husband, the Lord Mayor—who had had a most romantic history—had any real cause for looking down on Mac and Jessie with any lack of sympathy.

Yes, a great many things had happened in that room! A room that has been standing for, say, a hundred and fifty years, has seen much.

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* He used to live in Muscovy Court, close by. She parted with him because he would put the blue ribbon attached to the guitar he twanged round his neck, when he knew how she hated that blue ribbon.

There was the chair in which John Harbuckle's mother had died. There the door through which John Harbuckle had run with his little sister, Mary, like a flying cherub, on his shoulder; the very same door round which Mac had that day caught Jessie peering. There was the old yellow mantel-piece with its last-century garlands and pilasters on which John Harbuckle had found his Jessie's fatal letter. There was the Argand burner, and the great table where we first saw the old bachelor writing his "few lines" to his fellow antiquary, and there were Mac and Jessie sitting by the window absolutely unconscious that any other beings had ever lived and loved before them!

Dear! dear! dear!—as John Harbuckle would say—who would have thought it was only on the 7th of last April, when all the tables and chairs, and even the dinner waggon and sideboard, were all crowded up with the dryest of archæological books and papers! Oh, what an upheaval! See what comes of introducing the feminine domestic element into a literary den!

"And now, darling, we thoroughly understand each other, don't we?—so we'll talk business," said Mac, after they had discussed their late experiences with considerable am-

plitude. "Why are you looking at me so seriously, Jessie? I am alarmingly ugly with this patch, I suppose?"

"I don't mind the ugliness of it a bit," said Jessie, "but I'd like to see you looking more as you used to look when we were in Birrendale."

"Ah! that's a long while ago," said Mac, half merrily, half sadly.

"A long while! why it was only last spring, and we're only just in August."

"By the calendar," said Mac, "I suppose you're right, but by my own feelings I'm years older than I was when I fished at the braefoot."

"Mac! I don't like to hear you talk so. Have I, then, made you so unhappy?"

"You, my darling! why you seem to me, sometimes, all the youth that is left to me."

"Donaldson has been worrying you?" asked Jessie, anxiously looking at Mac, for the tone of his voice had suddenly lost all its blitheness.

"He's simply taking all the life out of me," said Mac, "and just now I've none to spare. I witnessed an awful scene last night. I hardly know now what I had better do about him."

"Poor old Mac!" said Jessie, with a sympathetic pressure on his arm.

"To see a really noble woman fairly broken down with distress knocks me over," said Mac. "I sometimes wish I wasn't quite so—so—I don't quite know how to express it, but I can't help feeling things."

"But I should hate you, if you were not," said Jessie, encouragingly. "It was the woman Donaldson is engaged to?"

"Yes. She will neither give him up nor marry him, so of course there are scenes now and then. Unhappily, they dragged me into one last night at her house."

"Is she very fond of him?" asked Jessie, with a sigh.

"Yes; that's the worst part of the business. And he really can be awfully pleasant sometimes. He's as fond of her as he can be of anyone, that's, perhaps, not saying much."

"Why doesn't she marry him, then, and look after him herself?" said Jessie.

"Would you, if you were she?" asked Mac, seriously, his glance resting on Jessie with a kind of weighty questioning.

Jessie's own glance fell beneath Mac's, she sat still for a moment, pondering.

She could not answer that question, she evaded it by another.

"But if she is very fond of him?——"

"Ah!" and there was a whole world of various meaning in that sigh of Mac's.

"But if she is very fond of him?——"

"Then she shouldn't be!" exclaimed Mac, with blunt emphasis.

"Of course she shouldn't be, but can she help it?" asked Jessie.

"I don't know," said Mac. "But I think that were I only once in the state Donaldson was in the night before last, I should at least have manliness enough left in me never to insult you with my presence again. I could never see you any more; never, Jessie."

"Do you really feel like that?" asked Jessie.

"Of course I do!" exclaimed Mac. "I'd kill myself sooner than let you marry such a man, if I were such a man myself! Do you think if I were drowning I'd drag you down with me?"

"Don't look like that, Mac, you frighten me!—Perhaps it would be the kindest thing you could do. But I thought you and Donaldson were getting on so well," she added, changing the subject.

"So we were. Why, he never let me see him touch anything stronger than coffee! I acquired a wonderful control over him while I was all right. I don't know how it was, but he seemed to shrink from letting me see him

take anything then; but now he's just broken out again worse than ever. To do him justice, he was very kind to me when the accident happened. He sent for doctors, wrote telegrams, and did everything quite for the best; but as soon as the others came and relieved guard, there he was, all wrong again."

"He'd lost his master," put in Jessie.

"Aye! and I'm not so certain he'll find him again," said Mac, doubtfully. "I hope I've made a rash vow."

"What do you mean?" asked Jessie.

"She made me promise last night not to give him up; and I did. I hope I've done right: but you can't imagine how awful it will be to a fellow like myself, who is used to constant activity, to be penned up on board a yacht with a creature whom you can't get to do one single hand's turn."

"The yacht! I thought you were going on the Continent with him," said Jessie.

"So we were; but now he thinks he would rather make a trip to Norway in the 'Fire-fly.' You see, he doesn't take the remotest interest in any mortal thing; but she fancies that he likes the 'Fire-fly' a little, so I've promised her to go; but"—and Mac shrugged his shoulders.

"You wouldn't be away very long?" asked Jessie.

"No," he hesitated, "certainly not to begin with. I must see how we get on together first. She would have liked me to take him right away."

"Right away. How far away?"

"Well, you know, in these days no place is really far off? You get from anywhere in——"

"They want you to go to the other end of the world?" asked Jessie.

"Don't be frightened; I don't mean to go yet awhile, I can tell you. Besides, with a good steam yacht one can get back from the other end of the world in little more than half-an-hour, you know."

"You didn't promise?" asked Jessie.

"Promise! Well, I promised to go to Norway, but that's no distance. As to the rest, is it likely I should make such a promise without consulting you? Of course I am going, henceforth, to consult you about everything! Of course I am!"

"That's right!" said Jessie, "always take my advice and you'll never do wrong! You didn't ask me if you might go to Norway, though; that was wicked; but I suppose I must forgive you. When do you start?"

"As soon as we can be off. The trip will quite set me up, I expect. But the utter laziness of that man is something too dreadful.

You can't imagine any one doing absolutely nothing the whole day long, can you? It makes me feel as if I could kick him."

So Mac and Jessie sat in the window-seat discussing Donaldson and the trip until at last there were bugles, bells and clocks sounding outside the open window. The old-fashioned, pagoda-shaped affair on John Harbuckle's mantel-piece struck one, and Jessie sprang up.

"One o'clock so soon!" she exclaimed.

"One o'clock already," echoed Mac.

"And we haven't had half our talk out yet!" returned Mac. "I say, Jessie, isn't there some place out of doors where we can go on with it? It is getting very fine again, won't you take me out presently and show me something?"

"You'll be like poor Alec, wearying to see the Tower?" asked Jessie, with light mockery.

"You've something else to show me, perhaps. It's a good way from the Birren and the brae-foot, unfortunately. Oh, banks and braes! I shouldn't be sorry if we were there now."

"But there's a little river here, a nice little river called the Thames," laughed Jessie.

"Ah, to be sure, so there is! Happy thought, you shall show me the Thames. We'll go out presently and look at the ships and talk business; nothing but business, mark you!

I'm sure I don't know how the morning's gone," said Mac, "it doesn't seem as if I've been here five minutes!"

Just then the door was opened and in came uncle John. He looked furtively about; he shook hands with Mac quite bashfully, and enquired of Jessie if she knew where Alison was.

Jessie ran off and brought Alison back with her; when John Harbuckle, after having ascertained, by judicious cross-questioning, that his sister, Mrs. Bayliss, was out shopping and would not be in to lunch, proposed to bring up his friend Woolcomb—taking, you see, a mean advantage of his sister's absence. Oh, human nature, fallible even in such an exemplary character as John Harbuckle, what must it be in ordinary mortals like ourselves?

Mac and Jessie were not sorry to be quiet a little, they had talked a good deal during the morning, and their minds were full of crowding thoughts, the consequence was, that Alison, who made a charming hostess (a much better one than Jessie, any unprejudiced person would admit), Alison and the two elder men talked antiquities with tremendous enthusiasm, for, "Bits of old rubbish are so inspiring to some people!" as Jessie remarked, *sotto voce*, to Mac.

You will be shocked to know that a heap of books and engravings accumulated on the table again. The engravings were principally of the ruins of the once famous Convent of the Poor Clares, or Minorites, in which Alison was particularly interested. Poor John Harbuckle!—it was so seldom he ventured to put a book on the dining-table now-a-days that it was a perfect luxury to be able to do so once more!

It was Saturday afternoon; business was over for the week. Already the plateau in front of the bonded warehouses was nearly clear. There was no occasion for John Harbuckle and his friend to hurry away, so they lingered.

"We are going to see the ships and the Thames," presently said Jessie, rising from the table.

"This is a charming place to live in," remarked Mr. Woolcomb, "full of such varied interests—incomparably the most interesting site in Europe, as my friend Harbuckle well observes."

"It's none so bad," said, Jessie lightly, and five minutes later she and Mac left the house together.

"Now, Jessie," said Mac as they turned towards the river, "we really must go on talking business."

"My good fellow, who's trying to prevent you? Talk business by all means; begin this very minute—or stay, we must just take one turn through Catherine Court first; I must show you where my dear little mother used to live; because, you know, you are to know all about me and mine, and there are never to be any secrets between us; and now I've told you everything I'm really—I suppose I oughtn't to say so, because of making you more conceited than you are—but I really am very happy; only I don't quite like your going away. We'll go down to the Tower wharf," said Jessie, as she and Mac left Catherine Court. "We can walk up and down there and talk, and no one will stone us."

"What with the Tower and what with your cousin you must be growing quite learned by this time," said Mac. "Pray don't get learned, there's a good child, be a dunce like me; don't grow learned."

"Not I!" returned Jessie, gaily. "Still, you know, if you are ever so silly you can't help picking up something, and really this place is interesting even to such an ignorant person as I."

"Don't call yourself names, I can't allow it. It might have been all very well for you to do

so when you were *your* Jessie, but now you are *my* Jessie it's different."

"Mustn't I be humble any more?" she asked.

"You are to think the truth about yourself and respect other people's property," said Mac, looking down at her with great pride.

"Oh well, then, if I must not be humble I'll be generous; here goes my last three-penny to the old crossing-sweeper, who'll wish us good luck."

"How you do misuse terms to be sure! I call that *barter*, not generosity. Are you as superstitious as you used to be?" Mac asked, as, after Jessie had given the woman the coin, a shower of scarcely audible blessings followed them.

"Oh, all my omens turn out just the contrary, I'm losing faith in them. Such very strange things have happened to me since we've been in town, and they've turned out so well that I'm just in a whirl about everything."

"So am I," echoed Mac; "so we're both alike? I shall lavish a penny on one of those panoramic views of the Tower for poor Alec."

"This brae isn't like the Cauldknowe brae, is it?" said Jessie, as they went together down the hill, among the sellers of views who

pestered them until Mac actually bought a strip. "It looks terribly grubby and untidy to-day, and the few remaining people are horribly squalid. I don't like seeing squalid people, it makes one feel squalid oneself. Everybody is going away home. Always on Saturday afternoon here one feels one ought to be going home too."

"He let us pass because he knows I belong to Mr. John Harbuckle," continued Jessie, as the man who guarded the entrance to the Tower wharf withdrew respectfully, after having approached a few steps in order to challenge them.

"You belong to Mr. Harbuckle! I thought you admitted just now you belonged to me!" exclaimed Mac.

"Do I?" Jessie asked, very dreamily looking out on the full river, ignoring a string of visitors who were leaving the ticket place for the Tower in the custody of a Beefeater. "Perhaps I do," she went on, gently. "It is very strange! I don't understand it. Does a girl or a woman never belong to herself? Must she always be someone else's property?"

"Must we all belong to somebody else?" returned Mac. "Horrible is the fate of the wretch who has to look after himself! I belong

to you, Jessie, don't I?" he added, with a certain wistfulness in his tone she had not noticed before.

"Perhaps—I don't know," she said, in a half-whisper.

"But I do know. I know very definitely. You are always going to take care of me, and I am always going to take care of you. I knew that the first time I saw you. Take my arm, Jessie. There, a little firmer, darling. So! Let me feel sure I have found you at last. My Jessie, you can never imagine and I shall never be able to tell you what I felt when I was fool enough to think I had lost my dearest girl—it broke me down altogether."

"Poor old Mac!" said Jessie, patting the arm she had just taken. "Don't you think I can tell just a very little? I thought I'd lost you, you know. Have you quite got over it, Mac?" she added, rather anxiously.

"Yes, but you know I haven't quite got over this," he replied, touching the black dressing on his forehead.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEGINNING OF SORROW.

JESSIE was destined never to forget that Saturday afternoon's stroll with Mac Carruthers.

There are circumstances in the lives of all of us that time never touches as long as the memory lasts. Like the characters engraven on the Assyrian marbles which remain sharp and clear to this day as if they had never suffered a burial of twenty four centuries, so are some events cut into human hearts.

The keenness of their edge is never blunted; the vivid colouring of their details never fades; until the heart and brain, on which they are imprinted, perish with them.

Such an event was John Harbuckle's loss of Jessie's mother; such an event was that stroll with Mac Carruthers to Jessie herself.

How many a time will it all rise up before her! How many, how many a time!

She is young still, who can say what her future may be or whether, in this world, she

may have much or any future at all? but should she live until the children of children's children cluster round her knee, even then she will see it all again and feel it all again.

The broad walk before the Tower walls, the broader Thames, with its numberless craft, will all come back, and so will the sound of the lapping of the river against the stone steps, and her own young figure and his, standing there as they listened to the gentle beating of the water, mingling with the sharp tones of the call-boys from the passing steamers.

The colour will come back too, the red coats of a group of idle soldiers, the grey of her own dress, the darker grey of the Tower wall, the brown of Mac's hair and clothes, the black on his forehead—and that last detail—Ah! that last—when again will she cease to see it?

They sauntered up and down, talking now of their own affairs, now of the great river and of the ships and boats, now of the Tower. They looked at the Traitors' Gate and spoke of familiar history, talking unconscious poetry; they watched a truck being pushed along, a tram from the Ordnance Stores, and talked prose.

They saw a few things that even furnished subjects for merriment; they both said words

very delightful to each other, but which would look foolish in black and white. They talked about Birrendale, and of the market day at Kirkhope, when they had been offered gloves at a penny a pair, and they observed, laughingly, both of them, that this would be a very nice world to live in if it were not so dear; thinking just then, that it was alone the lack of money that kept them apart. Jessie took Mac's arm as they went on to the wharf and held it all the while they walked up and down; that, too, is a circumstance she will never forget. Nor will she ever forget that, when they had seen enough of the shipping and wharf, and were coming up the hill again, and again were being pestered to buy long strips of views, they met John Harbuckle, and Mr. Woolcomb, and Alison coming out of the Tower Gardens, where they had been examining a heap of old stones over by the Postern pump, but had strolled round to the gate opposite the bonded warehouses.

"Oh, Jessie!" Mac exclaimed, as he saw the others opening the gate, "let us go and look at the curious little arbour where we sat and talked about that wretched Donaldson, on that glorious night when I rushed down here to tell you the news, and you looked so pleased to see me."

"Oh, very well!" assented Jessie, "I'll ask uncle John for the key, only be careful, Mac," she added, gaily, "be very careful you don't mention to any of those earth-worms that you wish to see anything in particular, or we shall never be able to get rid of them. You can't think what dreadfully tenacious creatures they are; limpits are nothing to them. If they once got on to antiquities you'd never get them off, they'd stick to us all the afternoon. Be cautious now, Mac. Uncle John, the key, please. Alison, I can see you've unearthed something, but"—lowering her voice—"pray don't tell us! We don't want to know—'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be otherwise.'"

Uncle John gave them the key; Mr. Woolcomb tried to excite their interest in the old stones, but they would not let it be excited, so they passed on, and the antiquaries did them no hurt. Mac and Jessie looked after them for an instant before they unlocked the gate, and they both laughed, although what there was to laugh at no one but themselves could know; they were thankful they were rid of the others.

Jessie never again laughed quite like that; it was her last truly girlish, light-hearted laugh. She felt she was a girl when she

laughed by that gate; a few seconds later she felt she was a woman.

She and Mac walked side by side for a few steps, until they reached the broad, smooth path above the moat, the path then screened from the road by thick bushes.

As they turned into that path—it was nearly opposite the Beauchamp Tower—*Mac took Jessie's arm* and leaned on it as if from weariness or pain.

As he did, so Jessie felt her heart die down with an awful foreboding.

For a moment she could not speak.

"Mac," she said, after they had taken a step or two, speaking with a grave, womanly decision, mixed with great tenderness, "I am sure that bruise is paining you."

Mac had for a few moments leaned rather heavily on her arm; he noticed her altered tone, feared he had alarmed her, and relaxed the pressure.

"There is a dull ache, that's all," he said.

"What does the doctor say?" asked Jessie. These were the words she spoke aloud; this was the question she was anxious to have answered, but the sentence she said to herself was:

"Mac will henceforth lean on me, not I on him. I must take care of him, not he of me."

"The doctor, oh! he says it's healing up

all right enough. Jessie, I say, Jessie, don't frighten yourself about it! it will be all right soon. It hasn't had time to get well yet, considering what a blow it was."

Why did Jessie think of that night, the night of the 7th of April, when, as she had been sitting on the little stone wall that bounded the hearth at Cauldknowe, and had asked her aunt about seeking help from John Harbuckle, Mrs. Bayliss had said, with such bitter emphasis:

"When you are a widow yourself, it will be time for you to advise a widow!"

What made her think of it then? The words seemed to come across the moat to her, to come out of the Tower walls.

Was she to lose him after all?

"You are tired, Mac," she said.

"Tired!—what nonsense! I, who am so used to racing about from morning till night, tired!"

"That's all very fine," said Jessie. "I know you are not strong again, yet. It's no use pretending that you are."

"Wait till I come back from Norway," said Mac, evading Jessie's last remark; "I shall be as strong as Samson then; you'll see me one fine morning walking away with one of your Tower gates, portcullis and all. I shall

carry it off in triumph to Muirhead and set it up in the grounds—on the point overlooking the Birren, you know—what an attraction it will be! and the daughters of Scotia will rejoice over it, singing, 'How are the Southerns fallen!' and Alec, with the help of Alison, will add to the Border minstrelsy the Ballad of the Bold Carruthers. I tell you what it is, Jessie, all these exciting occurrences of the last few weeks have been too much for you; you are growing nervous. Now pray, there's a dear child, don't be nervous about me, I'm all right; I'm sure to fall on my feet, I always do; and I really couldn't bear to think you were worrying yourself about me; you mustn't, Jessie; really now, and seriously, there is not the slightest occasion. This bruise, I'll admit freely enough, for I don't wish to deceive you, is rather more troublesome than I like; but that's nothing; a week or two will set me up completely."

"Then I shall forgive Donaldson for taking you away," said Jessie, trying to speak gaily, but quite conscious that Mac had been talking on so glibly, only to keep her from being nervous about him.

The fact was that Mac, although he rattled along at almost his old rate, was in more pain than he cared to admit, and he tried to

fight it down, but its gnawing was not to be stilled.

"This is the way to our little arbour," said Jessie, as they paused at the foot of an ascending path nearly opposite that brick Tower at the north-east angle in which Walter Raleigh suffered so terribly from cold during his last imprisonment.

"Jessie you've never taken me along that other walk," exclaimed Mac, pointing to the path over-shadowed by the dock warehouses. "Let's go along there first, then we shall have been all round the square, if you can call a five sided figure a square."

Jessie shook her head and laid her hand on Mac's arm as if to detain him.

"Don't look so solemn, come, I've quite a curiosity to see the end of that walk; come Jessie," said Mac, with all his old impetuosity, and he tried to move on.

"My darling! my darling!" cried Jessie with wild entreaty in her voice, holding him back with all her might. She had never before used that expression to him, sudden terror forced the cry from her now. He turned round at once, her face was quivering.

"Jessie, what is it, my love?" he asked tenderly.

"Oh, Mac, that path ends in a grave:—a

little wilderness and a grave," she said, too agitated to prevent herself from saying what she wished unsaid as soon as the words were spoken.

Mac made no attempt to go on; his own countenance fell. He was for an instant startled by the incident, but recovering himself quickly he said, steadily:

"Darling, so end all paths," and as Jessie remembers, he raised his head, which had been bent toward her, and quietly looked along that path.

The flat grave was hidden in the little wilderness, Mac did not see it, but he caught sight, as he gazed along the walk, of masts slowly gliding by the opening between the docks and the Tower.

"But not that path—that ends differently," said Mac, pointing to the river; "that path falls into the ocean. Look, Jessie, there is a ship going down with the tide. See. the masts fill all that space, it's going right through a sunbeam. It's very beautiful, isn't it?"

Jessie looked at it and smiled, but rather faintly.

"We are going to sail together," said Mac, drawing Jessie a little nearer to him.

"We don't know," said Jessie, with vague distress. "Perhaps we are not. One of us

might be sent out to sea alone, and then what would become of the poor left-behind one?" and she shuddered.

"I tell you what it is, Jessie, I shan't let you bring me into the Tower Gardens again; you are far too nervous and superstitious for such a place," said Mac. "I'm afraid you've been making yourself ill with worry about me. Now don't worry any more, there's a dear girl. I say," turning round to the dock warehouse, and trying to divert her attention to a fresh object, as one does a child, "did you ever notice those great big B's up there? What's becomes of the S's, eh? B and S is what one is accustomed to hear and together see in these days. Those B's look awfully lonely up there. Doesn't it strike you so?"

"The Lord Mayor uses up all the S's for his collar, don't you know?" said Jessie, lightly. "The B stands for——

"I know what it stands for with Langdyke," said Mac.

"It stands for 'Bonded' here," said Jessie. "Everything's bonded about here, warehouses, casks, carmen, everything. I often think we must all be bonded too. Ah!" she went on, rather quaintly, still looking up at the gigantic walls, "there's a deal of solid comfort to be got out of these things; they're

like Alison in that respect. Docks and warehouses and foreign produce, and so on, don't make one eerie, like those old prison lodgings do. Prose is a very fine thing, Mac, don't you think so now?"

"Now? When did I ever think anything else, you funny little creature? Go on—I know you've more to say, I can see it in your face," said Mac, still intent on cheering her as well as he could, for she had alarmed him by her terror.

"Yes," said Jessie. "How nice it would be if you were a City man! If, for instance, you were learning indigo, or ivory, or palm oil, or tea. By-the-bye, I have learned to recognize the young men who are studying tea; they always have such new, new hats, they are always got up so nattily (you must excuse that horrid word, but it's the only one that expresses them), and they run about in a desperate hurry with a little sample canister tucked most cunningly under one arm, just as if it were part of themselves. Oh, there's no mistaking them!"

The merry, merry twinkle came once more into Mac's eyes.

"How I could fancy myself as a young man learning tea!" he laughed. "So that's the sort of fellow you admire, is it?"

"No, it's the solid advantages of all these things," said Jessie. "Only, to be sure, they go wrong sometimes, and people kill themselves for shellac and other drysaltery. A man killed himself last week, you know, for something of——"

"Jessie! Get out of the way, Jessie!" cried Mac, drawing her back suddenly.

"Ah! they're stoning us! I forgot—" and a great piece of brick-bat fell about a yard in front of her.

"The rascal! There he goes! Ugh! I wish I could catch him!" exclaimed Mac, gnashing his teeth with rage. "Ugh! If I had you, you rascal!" shouted Mac.

"It's our fault! We shouldn't have stood here talking. Make haste, let us get home. We shall be safe there. We ought not to have stood here where they can see us. I told you it enrages them too much. They hate decent people. Make haste home."

"If I could only catch him!" ejaculated Mac, fiercely. Just then the bruise on his forehead pained him so much that it was a relief to him to be able to shout after the wretched urchin who had thrown the stone.

"Shall we go into the little arbour?" said Mac, "that rascal has frightened you."

"No, no," said Jessie. "Let us get home

as soon as we can. I can't stay here any longer. No, Mac—I can't take your arm, they might stone us again. Come, let us get home." And she went up to the gate, Mac following, and so they left the Tower Gardens.

The Lurlei of the Rhine sits, as the song tells us, upon a rock and combs her golden hair with a golden comb, while she watches for her prey; the locks of the bare-headed Lurlei of the Thames, who haunts the corner opposite St. Katherine Docks, appear as if no comb, golden or otherwise, often touched them. The Lurlei and the gallant British Tar were standing about unmolested when Mac and Jessie left the gardens by the gate opposite the Mint. No one, apparently, had thought of stoning *them*.

Going along the narrow Postern Row, Mac and Jessie were sore beset by the local photographer, who wanted to take their portraits; that is to say, they would have been had not Mac made short work of him, and pushed on. Mac was in no mood for standing nonsense just then; he would have liked to have put the matter of that brick-bat at once into the hands of the City police; only it so happened that it had been thrown just outside the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction

"Poor old Mac! how furious he was about that brick-bat, to be sure! He didn't make near as much fuss about the place on his forehead!" said Jessie, many a time afterwards to Alison.

Jessie did not know at the time how much of that furiousness was due to the pain of that bad place.

She was thankful when they left Postern Row with its motley passengers, where the seamen of all nations are often to be found among a choice selection of London roughs of the loafing kind, of which last class it must be confessed Jessie had an abject terror; she was thankful, I say, when she and Mac reached the broad white pavement in front of the elegant Trinity House.

There she ventured to take Mac's arm:

"I have a mortal dread of the lower orders," said she, "you can't think how frightened I am of them. Alison isn't; but then, I don't know how it is, they never annoy her, although she often goes prowling about those dreadful streets behind the Mint. But no one ever annoys her; now they never lose an opportunity of frightening me."

"Jessie, never go out alone here," said Mac, almost sternly; then, his tone suddenly altering, "How I wish I could take you right away,"

he said, "I shall never feel comfortable about you as long as you are here."

"Oh!" said Jessie, "they all look after me very well, and, you see, your presence was no protection just now, quite the contrary.'

"It makes me long for the regions of the Far West!" said Mac, relapsing into something like his ordinary tone. "I often think I should like to go out to the plains beyond the Rocky Mountains and shoot wapiti; there the London rough would never come and there my little income would be wealth vast as the boundless prairies. I would be off at once only I can't bear the idea of your pretty hands being employed in nothing but washing up greasy pots and pans; which seems to be the only occupation of the wife of the wapiti hunter; and, of course, I couldn't settle anywhere without you. No, Jessie, I'm afraid I couldn't stand it; neither could you. Ah! If those masts down yonder only belonged to that ship of mine that won't come home! Well, they don't! I must be getting back to Langdyke, I left him this morning with that very noble woman who has the sublime folly to love him, when I came down to look——"

"At the sublimely foolish Jessie — eh, Mac?"

"Eh, Mac?—eh, Mac?" he repeated, with a

fond, playful mimicry, and then they found themselves again at John Harbuckle's door.

They looked for an instant into each other's faces, were each conscious that the other was hiding something? They smiled, turned grave at once, and went on through the hall and up the stairs. Jessie went first; hidden from Mac, her eyes dimmed with tears, her features grew tremulous.

Mac followed and, now Jessie was not looking at him, he allowed his brow to contract with sharp physical pain.

"You will have a cup of tea before you go?" asked Jessie, without turning round.

"Thanks, I shall be glad of it," he said, and Jessie's quick, anxious ear detected a suppressed agony in his voice, an uncommon ring of suffering in the commonplace phrase.

She did not turn and look at him, feeling instinctively that he would rather she did not, but she stretched a sympathizing hand backwards to him.

He bent and kissed the outstretched palm, pressing it tightly to his lips which a moment before he had been biting; and as he did so a sharp pain touched Jessie's heart:

"Oh," she felt, "am I going to lose him, after all?"

CHAPTER VIII.

SYMPATHY.

"OH, Mac! There must be people!" whispered Jessie, as she and he passed the baize doors and caught the hum of voices in the drawing-room.

"Then let me go at once," said Mac.

"But if it's my father!" said Jessie," you must see him, mustn't you?"

"For one moment only, then! said Mac, wearily, and Jessie, opening the drawing-room door, found, it seemed to her, quite a large gathering.

Mrs. Bayliss had returned, but still was wearing her bonnet and mantle. She had drawn a chair up to the open window; opposite her was a man, whom Jessie did not recognize, who had drawn another chair up to the window.

Alison was pouring out tea at a small table, John Harbuckle and Mr Woolcomb were sitting near her; the whole of them,

however, were listening to Arthur Bayliss, who, cup in hand, held the hearth-rug (was standing on it, I mean) and also the attention of all the company.

He was spinning them an African yarn, and he yarned extremely well.

Jessie shrank from the scene, it looked too festive for her, but she knew she must face it.

The entrance of Jessie and Mac put a temporary end to Arthur Bayliss's anecdote. He looked up at Jessie, who at once went to him.

"Father," she said, under her voice, "here is Mac."

Arthur Bayliss put his cup into his left hand and offered Mac his right.

"How are you?" he asked; "all right again, I hope." For himself he was just then quite at his best.

"Thanks, I'm getting along," said Mac; "this"—and he touched the black patch—"this is worrying me a little just now."

"An awkward place to be hit in," observed Bayliss.

"Yes," assented Mac, looking round for Jessie, who had gone to fetch him some tea, "yes, but it's healing fairly. Thank you, Jessie. No, I won't stay."

And he drank off the tea and went abruptly, after promising Jessie to see her again in a day or two.

"Jessie, don't you remember Major Merriman?" asked Mrs. Bayliss, indicating the man who was sitting opposite her.

"You called on us one day at Cauldknowe, a very long time ago, didn't you?" asked Jessie, suddenly remembering him.

"Yes; I suppose I'm a good deal changed since then, and, bless me! why you're quite grown up!" exclaimed the Major, as if greatly amazed at the astounding fact.

Jessie said she supposed she was no longer a little girl, and, as soon as possible, retreated into the shade of the curtain, as she was in no humour for conversation just then.

Arthur Bayliss recommenced his yarn; few things gave him greater pleasure than to have the undivided attention of an audience:

"And there we saw the poor wretch bobbing up and down, and drifting further and further away from the ship, and the albatrosses flapping over him."

"Father, how can you repeat such awful things," said Jessie, from the shade of the curtain. "What a horrible story!"

"It's quite true, though; and I remember on another occasion," and off he went on to

some more horrors, during the telling of which Jessie quietly slipped away.

"You were sitting behind the curtain, so you lost sight of the little Major's expression while uncle Arthur was talking," said Alison, some time afterwards to Jessie. "That was a pity, the little Major's expression was indeed well worth seeing."

There are, as a very small amount of observation will convince us, majors and majors. All majors are not tall and spare with shaven cheeks and a heavy moustache. Major Merriman, whose age was probably forty-six or thereabout, was a round little man, who had managed to preserve an almost infantile freshness of countenance. As Arthur Bayliss spoke, the Major looked across at him with the guileless wonderment of a boy of six, who for the first time hears a shark or alligator story. No one could think then of him as the hero of those tremendous adventures he sometimes recounted to confiding friends. He could talk about tigers as well as any man in Her Majesty's Service. He had the roundest, smoothest face imaginable, upon which many years of Indian life had left scarcely a trace, and a couple of round, childish eyes, that had looked quite shy and startled when Jessie spoke to him. He was a most singularly

unspoiled-looking creature, was this little Major Merriman, this comparatively elderly "Age of Innocence."

Half-an-hour before Mac and Jessie had come in Mrs. Bayliss had returned.

She had been out shopping, for now, what with her own pension, and the unencumbered rent at Cauldknowe, and no Jessie to buy for, she felt herself justified in occasionally spending a little money on dress and so on for herself and Alison. She liked spending money, but shopping made her very weary.

She was in the most delightful temper when Jessie came home, but half-an-hour before she had been tired and in the very worst of humours. What had caused the difference? Simply this:

As she went up to the baize door, on her return, what should she see but a man coming away from it.

A glance sufficed to show her it was not John Harbuckle, nor poor, dear Arthur, nor that wretched old Woolcomb, nor any other of John's cronies.

He came down a stair or two, he raised his hat, which was nearly covered by a deep mourning band, and simultaneously both exclaimed:

"It must be Major Merriman!"

"Mrs. Bayliss, how are you?"

And the Major, when he spoke, took the widow's dark-gloved hand, and pressed it between his own; for he was one of those men with softly-padded palms, who invariably press a woman's hand whenever they have the chance.

"Major Merriman, I'm delighted to see you!" exclaimed Mrs. Bayliss, her weariness vanishing like the mists of dawn before the rising sun. "How fortunate I happened to return! Was no one at home? Well, come upstairs and tell me all the news. It is years since we met."

He followed her into the drawing-room. Mrs. Bayliss drew up a chair to the narrow, old-fashioned window, and indicated the opposite one to her visitor.

"Let me see, you and Bayliss were at Malta with us, weren't you? I am at Woolwich now. In fact I have a staff appointment," said the Major, taking the chair.

"You were always so lucky!" sighed Mrs. Baylis; thinking of her poor James and of his many and signal failures.

"Ah! don't say so!" returned the Major, with even a heavier sigh than Mrs. Bayliss's, his limpid eyes clouding over like a grieved child's; "you have heard of my great loss?"

Mrs. Baylis did not speak, but simply inclined her head in token of her acknowledgment of the sad fact.

"You remember my poor Emma? She was with us at Malta," he said, very sorrowfully.

"I do indeed!" said Mrs. Bayliss with sympathetic emphasis.

("Indeed I do, she tried to flirt with my husband," she added to herself.)

"When did it happen?" asked the widow, under her voice.

"Just four months ago this very day. Ican't get over it," he said, with simple grief.

"One cannot," she returned, with emotion, thinking not of the Major's late wife but of the grave beside the Birren.

"One cannot! No, one cannot:" he added. There was a pause, a very speaking silence, and then the Major drew out a locket that was attached to a jet guard, opened it and showed it to the widow, without uttering a word.

Mrs. Bayliss looked at it attentively and again sighed.

"It does not do her justice," she murmured, in a carefully modulated voice.

"What could?" asked the poor widower.

Then he carefully closed the locket and gazed sadly out of the window.

He was in the deepest mourning, in a suit of the blackest black, with a waistcoat of almost clerical cut, and a black stock with a jet pin in it; and he wore his late wife's wedding ring upon his little finger.

Mrs. Bayliss, although it was not far from two years since the Captain's death, was still in the first weeds.

She thought it would be a relief to the Major to talk about his late Emma, so she drew him on to a recital of her illness and death; and then told him a great deal about her own late James.

"Poor Bayliss!—Poor Bayliss! Good kind fellow!" ejaculated the Major; "and has he really been gone so long? Nearly two years?"

"Six hundred and ninety-five days," said Mrs. Bayliss, with emphasis.

"As long as that!" exclaimed the little Major, opening his startled eyes to their widest extent.

"Six hundred and ninety-five days," repeated Mrs. Bayliss, then she too looked sadly out of the window, and rested her glance on the new barracks of the Tower.

The little Major was deeply touched.

"Poor Bayliss!" he murmured, sympathetically; "poor Bayliss!"

"And you are living near Woolwich now, I suppose?" asked Mrs. Bayliss, turning towards him again.

"Yes, I've a house on the Common," he replied.

"Ah! That was where I first met poor James," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"It is a very comfortable little house," said the Major. "I have a sister living with me. You remember her, I daresay, she is—she was engaged to a gunner, Charlie Duke; it was broken off. He left his bones in Ashantee, poor fellow. Lettie takes care of me and my boy, but"—and he found a difficulty in getting any further.

"And how did you happen to hear of us?" asked Mrs. Bayliss, coming to the rescue.

"I've often wondered what had become of you all. I often said to poor Emma, 'Now, do write to Cauldknowe and ask how they all are;' but, poor thing, her health was so bad and everything was such a trouble to her that the letter was put off and put off, until at last it was never written. I happened to be over at the Tower upon business this morning and I heard of you from a man who had been in

the 160th, so I made up my mind to call at once. I'm glad you all seem so——"

Just then Alison and the other two earthworms arrived, followed, after a few minutes, by Arthur Bayliss, whom the Major was extremely astonished to see:

"Why, I thought you went to the bottom of the sea, years ago," he exclaimed.

"That was another Arthur Bayliss; I've been out in Africa;" returned the wanderer with quiet self-possession.

"And I in India."

Then, as is the nature of men who have lived long abroad, they easily drifted into yarning.

Mr. Woolcomb, with whom during the recent walk John Harbuckle had had several differences of opinion, presently departed, laden with the three books he had just picked up at a stall, and sundry small bags of dainties for his invalid wife; but the Major lingered on. It might have been the charm of Arthur Bayliss's eloquence, or it might have been the comfort of Mary's silent sympathy; but certain it is he lingered. Certain also is it that John Harbuckle afterwards observed to himself:

"I think Mary is already much benefited by her stay here. The improvement is

doubtless attributable to her comparative freedom from carking care and petty annoyances. I really thought her quite good-looking as she sat by the window listening to Arthur Bayliss this afternoon. Poor Mary, what a pretty girl she used to be!"

Mary was in a perfectly lovely frame of mind for the whole of the Sunday, a day which, in the City at any rate, is apt to be rather trying to some people; and which was, as a rule, especially so to Mrs. Bayliss, who at all times hated it there.

Mrs. Bayliss had talked to the Major freely about the late Captain, and it had done her a great deal of good; she felt very much the better for it. She had spoken more freely to the Major on this subject than she had ever been able to do to John Harbuckle or Arthur Bayliss.

And Major Merriman had been very sympathetic.

CHAPTER IX.

PARTINGS.

"AND when do you think you will be back from Norway, Mac?" asked Jessie, when Mac came to bid her good-bye.

"That just depends upon circumstances," Mac answered. "If he gives me too much trouble I shall return at once; if not, we will try to make out the fine weather. I should think, though, two months would be the very longest. And now, Jessie, you are not to worry yourself about me; you understand, darling. You see, I am much better already, and this trip will be all I need to set me up thoroughly. Nothing could be more fortunate. You promise not to worry yourself?"

"Yes," said Jessie, resolutely. "If you really are better, I won't. Only I know it was paining you dreadfully on Saturday."

"Yes, it was, most atrociously; but it's better again now. I don't think there is the slightest cause for anxiety."

"Would you tell me if there were?" asked

Jessie, turning up her face to his with half a smile on her lips, but a penetrating gravity in her eyes.

His own softened as they met her gaze.

"Could I ever hide anything from you?" he asked, kissing her.

"That's no answer to my question!" said she, with a more persistent steadiness than he had expected.

"Believe me, dear, there is nothing to be frightened about. Never fear that I could hide anything from you, Jessie; I tell you I could no more keep a secret from you than I could fly."

"Ah! But you might be afraid of hurting me!" said Jessie.

"Well, you'd not have me be *not* afraid of hurting you? Eh?" And Mac tried to turn the subject. "Of course I shall always be afraid of hurting you; should I be a man if it were not so?"

"Shall I tell you what would hurt me most of all?" asked Jessie, still with that same persistent gravity.

"Yes, if you like!" said Mac, with assumed gaiety. "My sweetest! Don't look so anxious; I'm not worth it, Jessie!" he added, quite huskily.

"Yes, you are," she said, with simple direct-

ness; for she was feeling much too grave for play then. "Oh, Mac, dear, nothing would ever hurt me like *not being told!*"

"Then you *shall* be told, Jessie—don't you believe me?—you shall be told when there is anything to tell. There now, I promise! Won't you believe me? or are you going to be the first person that has ever doubted my word? Don't you know I've always been called 'honest old Mac?'"

They were standing before John Harbuckle's ancestral Lord Mayor; Jessie, with a hand on each of Mac's arms.

Mac looked down upon her with such frank, truthful love, that she was obliged to say, playfully dropping into the Birrendale accent, although the fear in her heart would not be still:

"Nae, I'll just trust ye, Mac!"

The ancestral Lord Mayor has not revealed Mac's reply; probably it was not given in words.

Mac had but little time to give to adieux. He and Jessie had to be satisfied with a brief interview.

After it was over; when the clock on the old mantel-piece told Mac he must stay no longer they went up to John Harbuckle's den, and there they found him conversing earnestly with Jessie's father, who was smoking a cigar.

Mac shook hands with both; they both wished him a good journey, and good-bye; then immediately after he was gone resumed their conversation, which was not at all antiquarian.

In the drawing-room they found Alison and her mother, and also Major Merriman, who looked as startled when Mac bade them all farewell, as if his going had not been the theme of Mrs. Bayliss's discourse at the very moment when she was interrupted by the entrance of Mac and Jessie.

"The colour of Mrs. Bayliss's hair puts me in mind of the Swedish girls. Ah! I wonder if they'll be half as charming as those idols of my youth, the Viennese. Do you remember how awfully, frantically jealous you were of those Viennese girls I met at Nice? They were just perfection! How I wish I were going to Nice instead of Norway!" said Mac, as they went downstairs together.

"Perhaps," said Jessie, nodding her head, as she used to do very frequently in the braefoot days, "perhaps I may go to a ball or two at Woolwich next season. Perhaps—by-the-bye, I forgot to tell you I saw young Johnstone—Captain he is now—going into the Tower only yesterday. He's quartered there;

Major Merriman heard of us through him. Ha! ha! Mr. Mac!"

"Ha! ha! Miss Jessie!"

"Of course, if you are going away, I must flirt with someone else! Ah, Mac! I remember one night while you were at Nice, I said to myself, 'Now, I don't know where he is, but I'm quite sure what he's doing, why flirting, of course!' and, by your own confession, I was right."

"Never no more, Jessie, never no more!" exclaimed Mac.

"Until next time! eh, Mac?"

This last remark was made down at the hall-door, which was then closed; so they managed to have one little game of play before they again grew serious and parted.

Jessie stood at the door looking after him until he was lost to her and then she ran upstairs and cried her heart out.

As for Mac, the merry twinkle all died out of his eyes as he turned away from John Harbuckle's door-step in Trinity Square. Mac steadily plodding along Tower Street looked a good deal older, somehow, than the Mac Carruthers who had stood in the biting east wind on the red step at Cauldknowe which Janet had made so beautiful, in her own esteem, with red ochre and whiting. Perhaps

he was sad at leaving Jessie, perhaps it was the effect of that black patch on his forehead, or perhaps it was Langdyke; certainly much of his blitheness was gone. What of that?—he was young enough for it all to come back again.

But if he were less blithe than on that day when Jessie had heard the trot of his horse coming down the avenue, there was a depth of happiness in his heart he had not dreamed of then. There was, indeed, a twinge of agony when he turned away from Jessie to which the physical pain of Saturday seemed as nothing; but underneath all there was a happiness, a bliss, that made him greatly and gently humble.

"Who am I that I should be so much loved, and by so sweet a girl?" he said, in the innermost depths of his heart. "I'm not worthy of her! I told her the very truth, I'm not worthy of her. Oh, I hope I may be!" That last aspiration was very like a prayer.

An hour later Mac was sitting in a drawing-room somewhere near Eaton Square, talking, under his voice, to an elderly couple, the parents of that "sublimely foolish woman," who loved Donaldson of Langdyke.

It was a large double drawing-room. A

grand piano was at the further end of the room, Donaldson was seated at it, *she* was standing by him, turning over the leaves of a book of Mendelssohn's duets. Presently they began singing, "I would that my love," perhaps the most sympathetic of all.

There is something strange about that duet which one hears so often sung, and so rarely well sung.

I have heard that duet murdered by good singers with fine voices, I also remember it as the most exquisite of all sweet music as it used to be simply given, without accompaniment, by two sisters, or by a brother and sister, who had scarcely a voice between them, on summer evenings, sitting on a ledge of an open window, overlooking the Thames. It is a theory of mine (of no value, but "mine own,") that the perfect accord which that duet demands can only be obtained by members of the same family. There was a remote consanguinity between Donaldson and the woman who was singing with him, they both possessed the family voice; there was also between them that other sympathy of which Heine's words speak.

It struck Mac, but it may have been because his own feelings were so strongly excited, it struck him that he had never before heard

such perfect tunableness. She had a pure soprano, he as pure a tenor; two strings of one clear harp. They loved music, they loved each other—in the song they were one.

The whispered conversation ceased as that one voice in its two sweet tones rose together. Mac looked across the long rooms to the piano that stood before a mass of flowers and foliage, with a grave and infinite pity.

He was not highly imaginative, the type did not immediately and distinctly suggest its antitype to his mind; but he was vaguely conscious of two lovers singing on the brink of hell, gazing up the while into the heavens that one of them had lost.

There she stood, Donaldson's guardian angel, and sung with him.

She had a sorrowful, white face, clearly and strongly drawn; she stood almost as still as a statue, one slender, bare arm hanging by her side, the other raised to the book on the stand, her tall figure draped in clinging china crape of the softest white. He sat at the piano, pressing the sound of the instrument with his long fingers, and lifting his face towards her as she sung. He looked then fair and almost handsome, and his voice had a pathos in it that would have sent a thrill through the most unsensitive heart.

"I would like to save that fellow!" Mac thought. He looked at the white arm against the white dress; "*that* wasn't strong enough to hold him!" he said, estimating its strength by the power he knew it would have over himself had it been his Jessie's; "*that* wasn't strong enough!"

He doubted his own influence; it seemed weak as water in comparison to hers.

"But I'll make a fight for him!" he said, registering an inward vow to allow no self-indulgence on his own part to make him weaker.

The song ceased. Mac turned to the parents and spoke to them for a short time. The two at the other end of the room turned over a few leaves, but sung no more.

"I wonder if they'll ever sing together again?" Mac asked himself, as Donaldson rose, evidently with the intention of leaving.

The lovers had probably bade each other farewell earlier in the day.

She stayed by the piano while he came into the front room, and shook hands with the parents.

Mac shook hands also, and both turned to leave. Donaldson went back to the piano, kissed his good angel as quietly as if she had been his sister, and went away.

The woman who loved him advanced a step or two towards Mac, who was about to wish her good-bye.

She laid a hand on Mac's, it was cold as statuary marble.

"You will do your utmost?" she asked.

There was the sound of chronic heart-break in her voice.

"I will," said Mac, pressing the cold hand with deep feeling.

The sorrowful white face was suddenly covered with a burning blush.

"I could hardly keep him here until you came," she said, her voice husky with shame and tears.

"I will do my utmost," said Mac, greatly moved. "I must go;" he went on, and with a hurried bow he left, and caught Donaldson, before he had quite time to reach the hall door.

CHAPTER X.

THE CRUISE OF THE "FIRE-FLY."

"I AM already another being," wrote Mac in his first letter from Christiana, posted the day of the "Fire-fly's" arrival. "The trip here has very nearly set me up again. The first salmon I catch will complete the cure."

A week later Jessie received another letter from the banks of a stream beyond the sphere of her own very limited geographical researches.

"I caught a fifteen-pounder this morning and am consequently in the best health and spirits. How delightful it is to feel perfectly well once more! I only need a congenial companion—you, I mean—to be perfectly happy. It is a long while since I have enjoyed anything so much as to-day's sport. Even Donaldson woke up when he saw me playing that fish, and actually helped to land him. I wish he would leave off pulling his moustache, it annoys me, sometimes almost more than I can bear, he pulls it so aimlessly."

"Glorious weather; and so much to remind me of Birrendale and Jessie! You would laugh if you could hear me strumming 'Ye banks and braes' on the piano, in the cabin; Donaldson is teaching me music; he seems fonder of music than of anything else; he goes in for sonatas half-an-hour long when the fit takes him. The way in which he plays a pathetic movement is enough to break one's heart. My performance offers a striking contrast to his; as yet I can only use one finger, the index of my right hand; but I keep on at that one incessantly, hoping to have the tune perfect to play to you on my return."

"Had some trouble with my interesting charge last night. He had a great wish to seek a watery grave, but I was able to meet the case with such forcible physical arguments that he ultimately listened to reason."

"Donaldson all right again. Mac better than ever. Another success—another fine fish."

"Nothing left of accident but a rather ugly scar."

These were some of the remarks scattered among descriptions of scenery, nautical adventures, journeys inland, and a whole mine of wealth of endearing words and phrases.

They were not all read by Jessie at John

Harbuckle's house in Trinity Square, E.C., some found their way to her in sea-side lodgings (for the home authorities managed to effect a compromise), some followed her to a country house, one she read, for the second time, by a window looking on to Woolwich Common.

"Mac is himself again!" was the comment Jessie made on the correspondence, and Mac being again himself, of course Jessie quickly became again herself.

Thanks to Major Merriman, a considerable variety was introduced into the girls' lives, when October brought him back from an autumnal tour with his son, and Mrs. Bayliss from rather a long visit to Birrendale, which she had been compelled to take on account of certain difficulties with her tenant who would never be satisfied with anything.

Fortunately that tenant took himself off, after obtaining Mrs. Bayliss's permission to sublet Cauldknowe.

Mrs. Bayliss did not take either of the girls with her for very obvious reasons.

The consequence was that, happening to meet Mrs. Carruthers at the Manse one day, that lady asked her to lunch at Muirhead; an invitation Mrs. Bayliss very nearly declined. She would, in fact, have declined it altogether

had not Mrs. Carruthers pressed her to come in the most cordial manner possible.

So she went and had lunch with Mrs. Carruthers and half-a-dozen other women ; all the men of the party, including the Laird and Alec, having gone to some distant moors for the day's shooting.

Mrs. Bayliss discussed the latest military intelligence during her visit to Muirhead ; speaking more frequently of Woolwich than of the Tower. It was observed that she seemed in much better spirits than formerly.

As she drove back to Kirkhope in the very same trap from the "Blue-bell" in which Mac and Jessie had driven on an ever-memorable occasion, Mrs. Bayliss hardly knew whether or not she was pleased or annoyed with her visit to Muirhead ; however, that night she wrote John Harbuckle a somewhat gushing account of the affair.

But neither her business worries nor sundry local festivities could tempt Mrs. Bayliss away from her allegiance to the memory of the late Captain. As long as she was in Birrendale fresh flowers adorned his grave.

She wept very much when she left. She had no Alison with her to point out the consoling light on the English Border, so she was very depressed all the way to Carlisle. But

when she left Carlisle she put up her veil, and had anyone been with her to see, that person might have noticed that she smiled a smile with a good deal of meaning in it as she watched the shadows flitting across the sunlit Westmoreland hills.

If the heart of a widow were like the heart of a widower one might from that smile have drawn a conclusion with a certainty of its correctness; but widows and widowers are quite different from each other, so that one must needs hesitate to interpret that meaning; suffice it to say, that on the return of Mrs. Bayliss from Scotland Major Merriman was the very first of her visitors, and that when he came he lingered; when he left he felt life a blank.

Now Jessie had to write to Mac pretty often, once a day, at the very least.

These young people had been wise enough not to promise daily letters (the greatest mistake possible); but as a matter of fact, they wrote every day and posted when a sufficient number of pages had been written. That is to say, Jessie did so, Mac, of course, was frequently unable to post.

This constant writing made heavy demands upon Jessie. Sometimes she hardly knew what to put next, and used to appeal to Alison

for news; for, strange as it may appear, even the writers of love letters will now and then run short of ideas. In these straits Mrs. Bayliss and Major Merriman proved an unfailing source of amusement to Jessie and also to Mac, who read out such portions of Jessie's letters as referred to them to Donaldson of Langdyke.

"We lost no time in betting on the subject," wrote Mac from Stockholm; "he bets she will; I, she won't."

"Alison declares she will stay with uncle John. Nothing, she says, would induce her to welcome the elderly age of innocence as her father's successor. For myself," wrote Jessie, "I need scarcely say, I think Woolwich Common the most delightful place in the world. I believe Auntie secretly prefers it to Cauldknowe but obstinacy won't allow her to admit as much. When are you coming home? make haste, for military uniforms are begining to appear lovely in my eyes."

This letter of Jessie's was followed by an enthusiastic account from Mac of some charming Swedish girls.

"And as you seem so very cheerful without me," Mac went on, "I don't mind telling you that Donaldson last night astounded me by making an original remark:

"'I've come to the conclusion,' he said, pulling away at his moustache with some degree of vigour, 'that what I require is an interest in life. Now you, you happy beggar, you can get an interest out of anything or nothing—I'm sure I wish I could, for life bores me unutterably. I've had enough of the North; it's getting cold, let's go to Africa, or somewhere else in the tropics. I've never been in the tropics yet; they might be interesting, and are sure to be warm. Let us go at once. I should feel better if I were thoroughly warm.' So I felt it a dreadful disappointment at first, as I had been looking forward to seeing you again very soon; but, you know, I could only have been with you a few hours after all; and I really believe Donaldson is much better away from home. I don't suppose we shall be away long, and it's all business to me—all in the day's work, I tell myself; so it really is bringing me nearer to you. Still I am terribly disappointed. I should like you to see me now. I am so weather-beaten you would hardly recognize me. Donaldson isn't—he's on the sofa in the cabin the greater part of the day. His laziness is simply inconceivable—he can do nothing by the week together."

"Off Hâvre.—It is frightful to be so near

and not to be able to run across the Channel to look at you. But it won't do. The woman who might attract Langdyke to town is in Italy, so he won't go to London and I daren't leave him. I am like the boy who stood on the burning deck, I must stand to my post at all hazards; but how I hunger for a sight of my Jessie, words will not express! Why did you abuse me so in your last letter?—etc., etc., etc."

"Madeira.—If you and your father are going to spend the winter here, how I wish would come at once! How delightful it you would be if you were here."

"Teneriffe.—Having heard so much of the beauty of Spanish girls, and knowing they were Spanish here, I resolved to look with a critical eye They were all hideous to my mind. Thought how well someone I knew would look in a mantilla, so bought one. Donaldson, in a Byronic mood, wrote off not such a bad copy of lurid verses last night, I was incited to scribble also, but my style is not lurid. All I could think of was to rhyme 'gowans' and 'rowans;' but a little refrain that had been knocking about in my brain for some time struck me as worth preserving:

"'And Jessie with the rowans in her hair.'

"Perhaps Alison will be kind enough to write

the rest of the song, which I feel ought to be a very good one, for me. I suppose it was the rose that accompanies the mantilla that suggested that charming line. I suppose I mean to convey that I should prefer the beauty of the brae with a bunch of rowan berries in her hair to—" and so on.

"Off Sierra Leone.—Had a most awful fright the night before last. Was sound asleep on the deck when suddenly there was a yell. I started up in alarm, just in time to see Donaldson spring over-board. Had a boat after him at once, wonder the sharks did not get him, as the water was full of them; managed to save him, but not without difficulty. I wish I could lock him up."

"The Cape.—Donaldson very penitent. Wants to land and go up the country. The scar on my forehead has been giving me some trouble lately. You see how I am keeping my promise. Really, it is only a little lump, not worth mentioning."

"So your father is suffering from the English winter! What a pity you both don't come out to Madeira! How very jolly it would be if you did. We would return to that heavenly island at once, and you could both of you cruise about with us. I am growing dull for want of seeing you."

Another letter or two, in which Mac tried to make Jessie understand what the tropics were like, and then longer intervals of silence.

Then a letter full of the beauty of the Philippine Islands, and nothing about himself. "Why do you never mention yourself now? Why have you dropped yourself out of your letters?" Jessie asked in her reply. Then another considerable interval and a letter from Honolulu.

"I have just met an English doctor here. He strongly urges my immediate return. He thinks I ought to have further advice about that eye" (was it by accident or purpose he wrote "eye" instead of "forehead?") "Donaldson is deeply aggrieved and hurt by my proposing to leave him. However, I have found an old school-fellow here who will be only too glad to take my place. I shall start as soon as possible—I tell you the truth, I am heartily sick of my charge; although much of the cruise has been most enjoyable. I imagine there cannot be much the matter with me, as I am feeling exceedingly well and as strong as ever. I hope a very little of the right sort of advice will put all straight. To me, by far the worst part of the business is, that I can't help fearing that my darling Jessie will take alarm. I almost wish she had not made me

promise to tell her everything. What can I say to keep her from being frightened? I'm not frightened at all myself; because I am taking any mischief that might possibly have arisen so very much in time. The only pain worth speaking of that I feel is, the knowledge that my dearest girl will worry herself; which, if she loves her poor old Mac, she is not to do. You will not get this letter many hours before you see me. Donaldson wishes to bring me back in the 'Fire-fly' but the yacht can't do the journey in the time of the mail. Donaldson and I have not parted finally. He says I have done him good; I wish I could hope I had, poor fellow, for the sake of the woman who loves him as well as for his own. There are times when I feel to like him." Then came a few words not to be scanned by any eyes except Jessie's.

Poor Jessie!—poor Mac!

CHAPTER XI.

MAC COMES BACK.

MAC'S whereabouts was so uncertain that Jessie never knew by what mail to expect a letter from him.

That letter about his immediate return arrived on a Saturday night by the last post.

The girls had been to Richmond with Arthur Bayliss, and both came home very tired.

"Why wait up for the last post?" said Alison, "nothing ever comes by the last post on Saturday except circulars or bills; it never brings anything interesting. Come, Jessie, I'm thoroughly tired out."

"So am I, but I must wait," said Jessie, burying her head in the pillow of the drawing-room sofa; "I didn't hear from Mac last week, and in his last letter he never said a word about himself. I'm afraid something must be the matter."

"Oh, you would have been sure to have heard if there had been anything wrong. Ill news flies apace!" yawned Alison from the

opposite pillow, and in a another minute she had fallen asleep.

But Jessie did not sleep, she listened to every sound, and thought of that stroll with Mac in the Tower Gardens now nearly six months ago.

After a while there was the loud rat-rat with the heavy knocker, which no one except the postman ever used.

Jessie sprang up, watched Sarah Jane go downstairs, waylaid her by the baize door, and looked over the letters.

She had not waited up in vain; among the circulars and business letters was one in foreign paper for her.

She ran up with it to her own room, tore it open, hastily looked through it, and then let it drop from her fingers on to the floor.

Alison, coming sleepily into the room a few minutes afterwards, found Jessie sitting by the bed-side, gazing straight before her, with the thin pages lying at her feet.

"Jessie!" she exclaimed, suddenly waking up; "Jessie! what's the matter?"

Jessie gave one little cry.

"Oh! Mac's very ill!—he's going to die!"

"No, dear, I hope not," said Alison, putting her arms round Jessie. "Let me see the letter—here," and she stooped to pick it up; "let me hear about it."

"What can it mean?—oh, surely something very horrible!" said Jessie, when she had managed to get through the passage in which Mac spoke of his immediate return. "What can it mean?—why must he hurry home?"

"Probably it's only the local injury," said Alison, trying to put the best face on the matter. "He says he feels well; it is merely the local injury that requires advice. But he will be back again directly; don't frighten yourself too much until you know what is the matter."

"I don't think I am frightened," said Jessie, with sudden calmness, "only I'm certain he's going to die."

"That's simple folly," said Alison, "there is nothing in his letter to——"

"I am certain of it," said Jessie, much too quietly.

"But you know, darling, you have had so many fancies that have not come true," put in Alison.

"This is no fancy," reiterated Jessie. "He is going to die."

"So are we all," said Alison.

"Aye! but not at twenty-five," said Jessie.

"Why should you think so? such wonderful things are done in these days; and he's strong and well. Come, Jessie, you can make mistakes

sometimes. How wrong you were about him when he didn't come that day he had promised to be here at eleven!"

"I was wrong then!" said Jessie, with a bitter twinge of self-reproach.

"I mention it, to show you that you *are* now and then capable of forming wrong conclusions. You shouldn't jump at ideas and think them certainties."

"I was wrong there!" repeated Jessie, as if the thought had now brought her some slight comfort.

"Of course you were!" said Alison, with decision; "and you very often are wrong. Remember, too, that nothing will pain Mac half so much, as seeing you look distressed."

"*That* he won't see," said Jessie, firmly. "How soon can he get home? Go and ask uncle John how soon Mac can get home. Go quickly, Alie."

Alison went downstairs with a very grave face. John Harbuckle and his sister were sitting by the fire. It was late April again now, but the nights were still chilly.

"This looks like a serious business," said John Harbuckle, with even more of his usual slowness of speech, when Alison had told the news.

"I'm afraid it is so," said Alison.

Mrs. Bayliss, who still wore her white cap, looked across at Alison with a very set face, but was silent.

"How soon can he get home?" asked Alison.

"On Monday, I should say," replied uncle John. "Dear, dear, dear me! I'm very deeply grieved—very deeply grieved!"

"You *do* think it looks serious, then?" asked Alison, under her voice.

"Most decidedly!"

"I'm so sorry for Jessie!" sighed Alison, "she has made up her mind he is going to die."

"She shouldn't do that," said uncle John; "no, she shouldn't do that. She has no warrant for that."

"May I tell her so?" asked Alison.

"By all means," said John Harbuckle, with emphasis.

"Good-night, mother," said Alison, with a kiss.

"Good-night, my sweet child," said Mrs. Bayliss, pressing her daughter to her with most unusual tenderness. "Good-night; try to comfort poor Jessie if you can. God bless you, dear."

"What did they say?" asked Jessie, as soon as Alison re-entered the room.

"Uncle John thinks you may expect Mac on Monday, that is, he may be in England on Monday; and that you are taking far too gloomy a view of the matter."

"Perhaps I am then," said Jessie, as if hardly daring to cherish the returning hope, whose fair face, she could not help feeling, was trying to peep round the corner of her heart.

"At any rate," said Alison, "I would, if I were you, wait until he had heard a physician's verdict."

"I don't believe in doctors," said Jessie; "besides, they never tell one anything. It must be something very serious or they wouldn't hurry him back so. Can he be going blind, do you think?"

"Oh, Jessie, darling! what's the use of talking at random?" said Alison.

"I'll try to wait patiently," said Jessie, and was silent: a fervent "Good-night" was all the girls uttered again that day.

They were both a long while going to sleep. All sorts of distorted images of Mac crowded Jessie's mind during the night; when the early bells awoke her on Sunday morning she was weary and unrefreshed.

Arthur Bayliss came round to breakfast.

"An ugly affair," he remarked to John

Harbuckle, who told him the news, "I heartily wish that engagement were broken off; mark me, it will never come to any good. It will only be a source of continual worry to Jessie. I shall break it off if I possibly can."

"You won't tell her so, I presume!" said John Harbuckle, with some asperity.

"No, I'll just see how things are likely to go first; but I'm not going to allow her life to be entirely ruined. It is a lovely day, I'll take the girls to church in the country somewhere. Have you a 'Bradshaw?'—I'll look out the trains; you and Mary will come with us?"

"Thank you, I am already engaged—it is my turn to address our school; as for Mary, here she is to answer for herself."

There was a curtness in John Harbuckle's speech that revealed a certain ill-concealed displeasure.

Mary did not chose to go; the two men said but little to each other, and Arthur Bayliss hurried off the girls as soon as possible to Fenchurch Street Station.

They went to service at a rustic little church in a remote Essex village.

The sun shone so brightly upon the glistening ivy that waved about the windows, and all seemed so happy and peaceful that Jessie took heart, and called herself very foolish for

thinking such gloomy thoughts the night before.

After the service they strolled about the lanes between the budding hedges and looked across the clear, smokeless country; and Jessie was glad, feeling that Mac was every moment coming nearer and nearer, and that to-morrow she should see him.

After all, what was there in that letter to warrant so much alarm?

Later in the day, while Jessie was still in the remote Essex village, Mac was being whirled through the lovelier Kentish country at express rate.

His original intention had been to see an eminent surgeon, who had been strongly recommended to him, and to know his opinion before seeing Jessie; but finding himself in London at a comparatively early hour of the evening, he could not resist going in search of her, as soon as he had secured a room at a great hotel near the Ludgate Hill Terminus, and had made himself presentable.

The church bells were ringing by that time for evening service; but he thought if he took a cab and drove quickly through the empty streets he might possibly find her still at home.

He had been feeling very sad all day long.

The excitement of this last hurrying to meet Jessie cheered him up, he could only think that in a few minutes he should see her, should hear her voice.

As he turned the kink at the end of Eastcheap and once more saw the historic Tower Street, with its narrow strip of blue and, on this Sunday, clear sky above its two rows of dingy houses, and the turrets of the White Tower filling all the space at the other end, as he drove along the thoroughfare that from time immemorial has led down to London's great fortress, he felt he was again to be with her, and all the fear of many days and nights flew away as he thought in how few minutes he was again to see her.

He sprang briskly from the cab as soon as it stopped at the well-remembered spot, paid the driver, and pulled vehemently at the bell.

The square was perfectly deserted; as he waited impatiently at the door, it struck him that a creature with so much vitality as Jessie could not possibly be there, all seemed then so dead, in spite of the tender young verdure of the trees.

He was impatient; he felt he was late, perhaps too late; that if he were disappointed, he should hardly know how to bear it.

Presently half the heavy double-door was

cautiously opened by Mrs. Robbins's third successor.

No one was at home. Mr. Bayliss had taken the young ladies into the country, Mrs. Bayliss had gone to church, Mr. Harbuckle had gone to some mission at the back of the Mint. Was he Mr. Carruthers? Because Mr. Harbuckle had given orders that he was to be asked to stop, if he were.

"Thanks," said Mac; "will he be late?"

"Oh, no; and the young ladies was to be in about eight."

"Then I'll come back; I'll take a stroll and come back," said Mac, and turned away with a most horrible feeling of heart-sickness.

He had turned mechanically into Catherine Court before he knew well what he was doing.

He had nerved himself up to seeing Jessie, with the full intention of telling her what was the matter; but she had not been there to hear it.

There was no one to see him in Catherine Court; he paced up and down for some time and a strange horror fell upon him.

Now Mac was naturally as brave a young fellow as ever breathed. Had he been the helmsman of a burning vessel, he would have stood at his post to the very last; it was in him to do that sort of thing.

For the last six weeks or more the surgeon's knife had been constantly before his mind's eye; but he had accustomed himself to look at it without flinching; but many and many a time when Jessie's face rose before him, between him and that keen blade, he had put his hands before his eyes, to hide the vision; it brought with it a dread that made him tremble to his very heart's core.

After he had taken several turns along Catherine Court, he paused under the weather-worn iron-work at its entrance and gazed at Tower Hill and the great building below it.

"How many brave men have faced death here?" he thought. "It looks all so fair and calm now; what sights it has witnessed! Ah! but it was not the death out here that was so terrible; it was the parting down yonder!"

He had met with a book on board the mail steamer, in which was a touching account of the parting between Dr. Cameron, the last Jacobite executed in London, and his wife. It had greatly affected Mac at the time he read it. The scene recurred to his mind as he looked towards the Tower.

When the time had come for the wife to leave her husband for ever, she threw herself at his feet in an agony of tears; "Madam,"

said he, trying to raise her, "this is not what you promised me."

Those words had haunted Mac ever since he had read them. He knew, poor fellow, only too well, why.

And yet, he seemed well and strong and weather-beaten. The black patch was gone from his forehead; there was merely a slight discolouration near the left eye at a little distance from where the patch had been.

He turned away from the Tower; again went through Catherine Court, passed between the tall walls, heard the echo of his own footfall in the stillness, and strolled into Seething Lane.

St. Olave's was lighted up for service; the swell of the organ came across the church-yard. He went by it, remembering, however, that it was there, under that black Gate of the Dead, Jessie had seen her father.

He turned round into Hart Street, by the side of St. Olave's; he walked slowly and sadly past the church door along the silent street between the deserted houses; there was not a sound besides his own step.

Again there was the swell of the organ, and through the still air arose the clear chant of the full-voiced choir and the familiar response:

"The Lord's name be praised."

Mac heard every word distinctly. The words made him long, with a sudden rush of emotion, that his mother were not in her Indian grave, but with him in some quiet place where he might throw himself upon her breast and weep.

He turned; he could go no farther. He went back to John Harbuckle's house.

A scarlet coat was at the door, its wearer was gossiping with Mrs. Robins's third successor; Mac simply remarked that he would go in and wait for Mr. Harbuckle.

He found his way unattended to that room which had grown to him so dear, the room that used to be John Harbuckle's den, and there he lay down wearily on the sofa.

The room seemed very desolate in the fast gathering twilight. He looked towards the window where he and Jessie had sat together, and then turned his face to the wall.

He would have to be brave when Jessie came back he knew very well, but he felt weak enough then.

And yet, through all the weakness and horror, that chant, with its rich modulation, rose up continually: "The Lord's name be praised."

What did it mean? Was that the foreshad owing of their rejoicing when this

calamity should be over-past (Mac had learned much Scripture from his Scotch aunt); or was it to be like the words of Job: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" Mean what it might, Mac heard it over and over again as he waited there, heard it rising and falling: "The Lord's name be praised."

It grew very nearly dark. No one had thought of lighting the lamps; Mac dropped off into a doze.

Presently he awoke with a start. There were voices on the stairs. He hurried to the door. He heard Jessie calling, oh, so gleefully: "Mac! Mac! Where are you, Mac?"

He hurried down the stairs and caught her in his arms just as she passed the baize door.

It was too dark for them to see each other.

"Oh, Jessie, Jessie! What a time you've been!" cried Mac, kissing her many times over, in a tumult of delight. "How glad I am you've come so soon!"

"This is good," cried Jessie. "I didn't expect you until to-morrow! I'm so glad you've come, Mac! But we mustn't block up the stairs like this. Let us go into the dining-room, and"—and they went on.

"What! no light! Let us ring for the lights, and then I'll be able to see you, Mac."

"Oh, wait awhile, please, Jessie," said Mac, half as in play, but with a certain something else under his tone. "Bide a wee, Jessie; let's have a little talk first before the lights come. How are you, darling? Sit down here and tell me."

"I'm as well as well!" cried Jessie, gaily. "And you?"

"Oh! I'm all right, except for a little lump near my left eye; that's all," said Mac.

"Mac," said Jessie, gravely, "was that why you didn't wish for the light?"

"To tell you the truth it has not added to my beauty," said Mac, with an attempt at carelessness.

"Mac, dear," said, Jessie, putting her hand on his quite calmly and firmly, but with infinite tenderness, as they sat side by side in the nearly dark room, "don't be afraid of frightening me. Tell me at once what is the matter. I am not going to be foolish. Tell me, Mac."

Mac drew a long breath.

"I haven't been to the doctor yet," he said, checking himself in time to prevent using the word surgeon. "As I haven't yet seen the doctor, I can't tell how it will turn out; but there's just a wee lump and a slight discolouration, that's all."

"That may mean a great deal," said Jessie, gravely.

"Why, yes," said Mac, without any alteration in his voice; "it doesn't seem much; but it means *cancer*."

They sat in the darkness, hand in hand for a moment or two, and Mac felt that Jessie was very near to him. Neither of them spoke; but Jessie could see that dreadful last word of Mac's written in great burning letters everywhere.

CHAPTER XII.

THEY TRY TO LOSE THEMSELVES.

IT was only for a few minutes that Mac and Jessie sat together in the deep twilight, silent, but feeling each other near; then the others came in, the lamp was lighted, Mac was hospitably welcomed, and not a word was said by any of them about the cause of his return.

He did not stay late; Jessie went down to the door with him, he promised her that she should know his fate as soon as he knew it himself.

The next day was very long to Jessie, although she filled it as full as possible with work, hardly daring to leave off for a moment.

Mac came again in the afternoon. He had seen the surgeon; he told Jessie the result of the interview in a very few sentences.

"He said: 'I must operate immediately.'"

"I asked, 'How soon.'"

"He replied, 'To-morrow.'"

"I thought of the Muirhead people, and

said they could hardly get to London by then."

"'I'll give you until the following day, then.'"

So I agreed, and sent them a telegram; but I shall not put it off for them. He thinks I shall be all right again very soon. It's not going to make me ill, you know, Jessie; only I wish it were to be to-morrow instead of the day after, but I thought the others would feel aggrieved if I did not give them due notice."

"Are they fond of you?" asked Jessie, wistfully, looking into his face.

"I think they are," said Mac, in a tone that said he was sure they were.

Jessie felt that she was sorry for them, in spite of the persistency with which Mrs. Carruthers would not see the engagement.

"What are we going to do with ourselves all day to-morrow, Mac?" she asked, gravely, but quite calmly.

"I can come here and talk to you," replied Mac, "or we can go out for a walk, or—perhaps I ought to know what the Muirhead people are going to do before we arrange anything. I daresay there is a telegram waiting for me at the hotel. I shouldn't wonder if my uncle doesn't come by to-night's mail, he never loses an opportunity of doing so if he can find even the shadow of an excuse. If he

comes I shall have him on my hands at least all the forenoon; 'It is my duty and I will,' as Captain Reece, commander of the 'Mantelpiece,' so finely puts it."

"Then it will be ever so late before you get here?"

"Oh no, it won't be; I'll walk him round to his club as early as I can; you'll see I shall be here very soon after lunch; and then, if you will tolerate me for the rest of the day, why here I will stay, unless you like to take me out into the City and lose me. Ah, happy thought, let us go out and lose ourselves among those curious passages where your young men in the tea-trade run to and fro—by-the-bye, Jessie, you have never pointed that young man you so earnestly wish me to resemble out to me. Let's go and look for him to-morrow! What do you say?"

"Very well," said Jessie, quite gaily, "only we must get out early or he'll be gone." And then they both began talking about all sorts of ridiculous things; but when Alison presently came in, Jessie did not let her go away again, but made her sit next to her, quite close, and put her hand within her cousin's, and her hand was icy cold.

Events proved that Mac understood his uncle very well. The Laird came to town by

the night mail; Mrs. Carruthers was to follow during the day; for, although a most affectionate couple, they rarely travelled to town together, the Laird objecting to wasting a day and his wife refusing to give up her night's rest.

"And Alec?" asked Mac of his uncle, after the first greetings were over.

"He'll go to the Dryfesdales for a week or so," replied Mrs. Carruthers. "I told him we should bring you back with us about the end of that time. The poor boy is needing you very much; so he says."

It was about mid-day when Mac succeeded in leaving his uncle at the club.

He at once went down to Trinity Square, after which he and the two girls—for in spite of the merry way in which both Mac and Jessie talked, they seemed strangely averse to being left alone—he and the two girls walked briskly up and down the business lanes and in and out of the fine new covered passages, all shining with glazed tiles, and tried very hard to lose themselves in the crowd around the Commercial Sale Rooms and various other places of resort. It was a fine bright afternoon, everyone looked very much alive, and the busy City was at its busiest. They could not help feeling how much alive and how

busy it all was; but it was in vain they tried to lose themselves, they could not.

Among other audacities they actually went into Fenchurch Avenue, and, heedless of the "Arnold Birkett" on the door, invaded the offices of Jessie's father.

And Jessie's father sprang up at once from his letters, as if wonderfully delighted to see them, and the pleasant and recognizable light flew over his face, as the three young people all burst out laughing at their own boldness in having, as Jessie said, "bearded the African lion in his den."

And Jessie's father, to mark the fortunate occurrence, produced a bottle of champagne from some private hiding place (Heidsick's Dry Monopole it was), and asked them if they would not come upstairs and drink it.

They all thought it the finest fun in the world to go up the wide, airy staircase to Arthur Bayliss's well-lighted rooms.

"And," exclaimed Alison, as they entered, "now, I know, where so much of uncle John's old furniture goes to! Why what a treasure this large room must be to him! And a balcony too!—of all delights in the world—a balcony!

"The very thing I've been longing for all my life!" exclaimed Jessie, stepping out

on to it and looking up and down the Avenue.

Then Arthur Bayliss went to that sideboard which he had purchased from the "rejuiced party" over the water, and found glasses; and they managed to finish that bottle of Heidsick before Arthur Bayliss thought it was so nearly post time that he really must go and get his letters finished.

"And I say," said Mac to Jessie, as they left the exceedingly modern Fenchurch Avenue, "your father is a most uncommonly jolly person, and the City is a most uncommonly jolly place! By Jove, it is!"

So they managed to pass the afternoon; in the evening they did what was for them quite an unusual thing, they opened the piano and played and sang.

It was Mac who opened the instrument. "Oh, Jessie," he exclaimed, when they were all of them, including Arthur Bayliss and uncle John, in the drawing-room, "I've never played you my 'Banks and Braes' that Langdyke taught me."

And with the greatest *sang-froid* he sat down to the piano, which was new and stiff, and strummed through the air, thereby inciting Alison and Jessie to sing an endless number of Scotch songs.

"Brava! bravissima!" cried Mac, patting Jessie's hand when she at last left the piano and took her favourite place on the window-settle again. "Jessie! I never knew you could sing like that!"

"Didn't you? Ah! you don't know half my good qualities," laughed Jessie.

"I'm beginning to think I don't," replied Mac.

To tell the truth there had been a thrill in Jessie's voice as she sang that no one had ever heard there before. Alison, who was a most tender-hearted girl, and who loved Jessie very dearly, would have liked to have run away and had a good cry.

Mac did not stay late, he said he must go and look after his uncle, to whom he owed a sort of filial duty.

"Are you walking to Blackfriars?" asked John Harbuckle.

"I thought of doing so," returned Mac.

"It's a fine night," said uncle John, "Jessie and I might as well go with you."

"Thanks, if Jessie is not tired," said Mac.

"Tired, oh, no," said Jessie, "I'll have my hat on in a minute."

So the three went to Blackfriars, John Harbuckle talking all the time, in a calm undertone, of the streets they passed along

and of the people who, during the day, cupied the silent houses.

They paused an instant at the door of an hotel so foreign-looking that if the moonlight had not shown the familiar Thames, they might well have fancied themselves in some Continental town.

"Well, good-night to you," said John Harbuckle, shaking hands with Mac.

"Good-night, and many thanks," returned Mac. "Good-night, Jessie, darling."

"Good-night, Mac, dear."

A quiet kiss and Mac Carruthers was gone.

John Harbuckle, who had turned his head, espied a cab. He beckoned to the man, opened the door; Jessie got in, John Harbuckle following as soon as he had simply uttered the words, "Trinity Square."

When they had driven a few yards Jessie put her hand within his and said, with a piteous little gasp and a shudder:

"Oh, uncle John!"

He held her hand all the way back, but she never spoke another syllable, and he could say nothing.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN INTERLUDE.

"MOST satisfactory!"

"Doing as well as possible!"

These were the reports John Harbuckle brought back when he went to inquire after Mac the next evening and the following day.

After that notes to the same effect came in Mac's own hand.

It was an immense relief to all concerned. At Trinity Square they felt that they could again breathe more freely.

Jessie was quite certain she had never been so perfectly happy before in her life.

The reaction brought with it a buoyant hopefulness that was in itself an almost ecstatic delight.

Jessie was as sure now that Mac was going to get well again very soon, as she had been certain he was going to die.

"I shall be able to drive round on Sunday," Mac wrote towards the end of the week, "I

will stay an hour; but no one must ask me to stay longer."

It was quite wonderful to Jessie that Mac should be able to come out again so soon; but Mac was so young and strong, he could get over things so easily.

While the people in the old house in Trinity Square are waiting in this happy mood, I will, in order to pass the time profitably and also to throw some light on an interesting subject, record a circumstance that took place in the drawing-room of John Harbuckle's house in the November of the preceding year; about the time that Mac Carruthers and Donaldson of Langdyke were cruising off Madeira.

You will remember that Jessie, when writing to Mac, had alluded to the frequent visits of a Major Merriman.

The young men on board the "Fire-fly" being—as young men at sea often are—hard up for something to do, had betted on the affair, even so long ago as when the "Fire-fly" was off Stockholm.

"He bets she will; I, she won't," wrote Mac.

The visits of the Major had been interrupted by Mrs. Bayliss's visit to her "place in Scotland;" for by this term, which allows the hearer's imagination such ample space to work in, she now always spoke of Cauldknowe.

The Major was her very first visitor on her return.

Here is a little scene which occurred not long afterwards—within, to be quite accurate, ten days after her leaving Birrendale and the grave beside the wild stream, that was still rushing down to the Solway.

She had wept very bitterly as she crossed the level plains by the Firth's side; there had been no Alison to cheer her, to point out the fair light on the English border.

But south of Carlisle, she had smiled a smile full of meaning. The question now to be considered is: What was that meaning?

If you could know, consider this little scene:

It was late in the afternoon. John Harbuckle's Wedgwood tray was still on the slender-legged table; empty tea-cups stood here and there about the room on various pieces of furniture. Mrs. Bayliss, Major Merriman, and the girls were also scattered here and there; Mary, still in her widow's cap, occupying a low chair by the fire (for the day was cold), the Major upon a corner of the sofa, by her; Alison was nearly opposite them, at the table in the centre of the room, Jessie between them and one of the windows.

The Major had arrived at four o'clock, it was nearly six now; but still he lingered.

Mary and the girls had each done quite a long piece of knitting since he had been there.

Presently it struck the hour. The girls rose; it was time to think of dressing for dinner. They slipped away.

The Major rose, opened the door for them, and returned, but not to the sofa.

He took up a position on the hearth-rug, and observed, accompanying his words with several of those little shrugs and arranging of garments by which a man indicates that he is about to depart:

"Ahem! It is time for me to be going!"

When he had made this remark, commonplace enough, there fell a dead silence on them both. There was a very long pause, during which the Major screwed the top button of his coat as far round as it would go without coming off. When he had screwed one way, he screwed it the other.

"Ah! It is time for me to be going!" he repeated; but he lingered still.

"Are you obliged to hurry away?" asked Mrs. Bayliss, calmly, very calmly, and without looking up from her knitting.

"Why, yes," said the Major, nervously.

They had been talking about poor Emma and poor Bayliss, they had been showing each other portraits; the time had not seemed long

to—yes, I think I must say it—to either of them.

The Major's fingers clutched at the jet guard to which was attached the locket containing his late wife's hair and likeness. He sighed deeply:

"I must go;" then he stopped a moment or two. "But when I leave here there is always such a blank," he said, with simple pathos.

He looked down at Mrs. Bayliss, she seemed to him a fair sympathetic creature.

"An awful blank," he repeated.

Again there was a dead silence.

"You know what I mean, you have felt the same," he said, after a very speaking pause.

"I do still," murmured the widow.

"An awful blank," reiterated the widower. "Could you not fill it?"

Another pause, longer, more impressive.

"That is impossible," said Mary Bayliss, gravely, still looking down at her knitting.

"Of course the past is passed, in—in a sense," said the Major, "but still—yes—I am sure you *could* fill it, if—if you would be—if you could bring your mind to accept such a task."

Mary Bayliss laid her knitting down on her lap, she crossed the hand on which was her

wedding ring over the right wrist, and she looked up steadily to Major Merriman.

"I thank you most sincerely for the honour you do me," she said, with deep gravity. "If it were possible for me to accept your offer I would do so, but"—and her face suddenly became irradiated as if by some inner light, and for the moment she seemed transfigured, young and beautiful once more—"but"—touching the white crape that covered her pale hair, and speaking with indescribably clear tones full of buoyant pride and tender sorrow—"I would not exchange my widow's cap for all the coronets in England, nor my loneliness for the devotion of the best man now living in all the world."

Her upward glance, her firm tones all but paralyzed the little Major; he felt rooted to the spot, he gazed at her as if mesmerized, with his childlike eyes wide open.

Then the colour flew into his face, he bent his head, he looked down at the rug; Mary gazed at her wedding ring; again there was a dead silence.

Then, after a minute or two, the widower quietly advanced a step, took the widow's hand, raised it to his lips as if it had been the Queen's, and withdrew; gently closing the door behind him.

Mary sat still for another minute smiling at the ring, then she rose suddenly, and ran upstairs to her own room with a lightness of foot that had not been hers for many a year.

She burst into tears as soon as she had turned the key, they were the happiest tears she had shed since her long-past girlhood; since, in fact, the day James Bayliss asked her to be his wife, in the woods that overlook Woolwich Common.

She had made a great sacrifice to the memory of her James; how proud, how thankful she was that she had spoken that decisive sentence no pen can tell!

"James!" she exclaimed, almost as if he were really there, "I said it, James!" and she repeated that sentence word for word in a tumult of happy and sorrowful feelings.

And she *had* made a very great sacrifice: from her own point of view, the greatest sacrifice she could have made. With what pride did she now offer that sacrifice to him! She went over each item as if each item were in itself a costly gift; there was the little Major himself, her husband's old comrade, whom she could have found it in her heart to like very much; there was the house on

Woolwich Common; the return to the dearly-beloved military life; there was the freedom from the City she detested; the showing Mrs. Carruthers of Muirhead that she was still an attractive woman; there were all these things, and they all had their weight, especially the Major's own startled eyes and unspoiled face and character; these things, I repeat, were all things she valued highly and knew she valued, but she took them all, every one of them, and threw them at the feet of her James Bayliss in a passion of delight and grief.

When her emotions had somewhat subsided she went up to her brother's den and, unannounced, walked in triumphantly; but withal with a certain quiet dignity.

John Harbuckle was looking over a manuscript in Alison's hand-writing.

"Well, Mary!" he exclaimed, turning round quickly at something quite unusual in the way his sister touched his shoulder; "my dearest girl, what has happened?—has he proposed?"

"He has," said Mary, emphatically; "but I couldn't do it; no, I couldn't do it! Ah, John!" and she smiled and shook her head, "how different, how very different a widower is from a widow!"

"Some widowers"—put in John Harbuckle, significantly——

"I'm going to stay with you, John."

"That's right!" exclaimed her brother. "That's right! After all said and done, Mary, you're a true Harbuckle; a real, true, genuine Harbuckle," and he looked with admiration at her still bright face; "and a very good example, too, my dear!—a very good example!"

"Thank you!" laughed Mary; then her mood suddenly altering: "John," she said, laying her hand firmly on his shoulder, "I would not change my widow's cap for all the coronets in Europe!"

The brother and sister understood each other very much better after this.

"But," asks someone, "didn't she encourage the poor little Major, don't you think?—just a little, now?"

Ah! my friend, there are depths, there are depths! Leave them alone; all I can tell you is, that Mary Bayliss refused him and was a happier woman ever after.

What I personally regret the most in the affair is that Mary's devotion was not offered at a worthier shrine; for, to tell the truth, the late Captain James Bayliss was not much except as a husband.

"A failure! a failure, Mary; all my life I've been a failure!" had been the poor fellow's dying lament.

"Never—never once in your love to me!" had been Mary's passionate response.

But had she flirted with the Major?—Ah!

CHAPTER XIV.

MAC AT MUIRHEAD.

IT seemed to Jessie Bayliss a very long interval between that Monday when she and Mac had tried to lose themselves and the following Sunday; although nothing could have been more encouraging than the daily reports of Mac's progress.

"So very successful," said Mac in each note.

Jessie sat by the window on the Sunday afternoon, waiting for him. She did not object to his seeing her there now.

"Poor Mac," she said to herself, as she looked along the empty road-way; "no one can be too kind to him now! Ah! there he is! that cab must be his."

And she ran down to the door as the cab clattered over the stony road and broke up the Sabbath stillness of the square.

There was no need for Mac to knock or ring; before he could do either the door was opened and he had taken Jessie in his arms.

Perhaps this sudden meeting was too much for him, Jessie felt that he was trembling violently. She looked up eagerly into his face as he bent over her; he turned a little aside as if to hide something he hardly wished her to see, but there was no shrinking from him in Jessie's anxious eyes, she lifted one arm, drew his face nearer to her and kissed him.

Mac looked so much an invalid; it was that that shocked Jessie, not the ugly place with the gauze covering so ominously near the left eye.

"It has shaken you terribly, I'm afraid, dear," said Jessie, when, after a few words in the hall, they were sitting side by side near the fire in the dining-room. Lovers' ways had almost vanished under the pressure of calamity; they sat side by side near the fire as if they were old married people.

"Why, yes," replied Mac, "it was enough to shake any man; but that is only a matter of time. I feel I'm on the right road now, I'm gaining strength every hour. They are going to take me back to Birrendale with them tomorrow. I don't like going away from you, darling, because I'm afraid you will be anxious about me, but it seems the best thing to do. The Birrendale air will soon set me up again. I have a sort of longing for it. If you were

only at Cauldknowe! If we could only have another drive through the dale! But that's coming, isn't it?"

He was sitting in one of John Harbuckle's great chairs; Jessie was close beside him; she noticed that his hands, which were grasping the arms of the chair, looked pale against the dark leather, and Mac's hands used to be so brown and strong.

She felt much disposed to cry, when he turned his face to her with that wistful question, yet she answered him, brightly:

"Of course it is coming! and it may come sooner than we think, for Auntie often talks of our going to Cauldknowe."

"That would be awfully fine!" said Mac, turning to the fire and speaking without any banter. "However, whether you come or not, you will see me again very soon. I expect Donaldson will be home in a couple of months' time. I must be all right by then. I mean," he went on seriously, "while I'm at Muirhead to go in hard for political economy. My uncle has been talking to me about it. He has a good deal of local influence, you know; and if I only were not quite such a dunce as I am, he says I could be of considerable use to him when he contests Birrendale for the next election; so I suppose I shall ultimately

tumble into something; and now I'm going in for real stiff work, I can tell you, with a view for fitting myself for whatever may turn up. I can work when I must, you know."

"I don't know," said Jessie. "But I should think that play would be your most profitable work at present."

"No fear of that when I'm near the Birren!" said Mac, with something like a flash of his old spirit "I should have liked—but it's no use wishing—I should have liked you to see me looking not quite so hideous before I went, I should have liked you to have had a more pleasant image of me in your brain. Never mind, I'll be just all right when we meet next time, Jessie. Do you always see our future in Birrendale? Now, I always see it there; it always seems to me as if you could only be lodging here. When I take you home it will be, I hope, to Birrendale."

"But what would Mrs. Carruthers say?" cried Jessie.

"As she will never be asked, it will not in the least matter. Like the rest of us, she will have to submit to the inevitable. But we won't trouble ourselves about that just yet; it will come all right!"

"Yes, of course; but you must bend your giant mind to getting well again, you know."

"That is precisely what I intend to do. It will turn out all right, you'll see it will. I told you I was always the luckiest beggar in the world! If"—and his voice grew softer—"if I ever doubted it, Jessie, I can't doubt it now."

"Why not? Don't you think Providence has been rather hard on you."

"No," said he, thoughtfully. "No, dear; because this trouble—and it's been an awfully great trouble too—has shown me what a dear, brave girl you are, my darling. That is worth a great deal of suffering!"

"I thought you knew that before; at any rate you used to tell me, you did," said Jessie, trying to call her merry "jokesomeness" to her aid, but withal more moved by Mac's words than she dared to show.

"I did know it;" he said, gravely; "but not as I know it now. I think, darling, I must ask you again to forgive me that once in my life I thought it possible I could have a rival. When I think of it, it makes me feel awfully low in my own eyes."

"But not in mine," said Jessie, with that friendly little touch of hers on his hand.

"I wish they were not going to take me away from you," said Mac, wrathfully; "it seems as if we were never to be together."

"So it does," asserted Jessie. "But London won't suit you now."

"I know that," said Mac, with a thoughtfulness which seemed to Jessie so unnatural to him, that she could hardly believe he was the same Mac Carruthers with whom she had played at Cauldknowe.

"I know that," repeated Mac "and I have a feeling that health and strength are waiting for me in Birrendale, so I must go and find them, because I shall want them both if I am to work for you. If it were not for that I could not tear myself away. Jessie, Birrendale, and Buoyant Health! that sounds well, doesn't it?—eh, Jessie?"

"Aye, Mac! Oh, you must go, dear! I won't ask you to stay; I wouldn't have you stay in London for anything in the world."

"I should say in three months or so I'd be quite strong again; but I'll be able to run down here again in a fortnight or so, no doubt. Donaldson will be back in about three months; but I think I'll not go out in the 'Fire-fly,' again just yet; and, indeed, he'll probably be sick of her by now. However, I suppose I had better not look any further a-head for the present. You are going to be as merry as you used to be, Jessie?" he asked; "I can't bear to think I have ever cast a cloud on your

brightness. Sometimes I'm afraid I really don't deserve that you should worry about me. Do I now?"

I don't think Jessie's answer came in any form that can be put down.

But Mac had solemnly promised not to exceed that hour the doctor had allowed him and he always kept his word.

The little clock had been going on all too rapidly; soon there was only just time to speak to the others in the next room, to say good-bye, and to go.

"Good bye! I'll run down as soon as I'm strong again. That won't be long; the matter of a fortnight or so. It's been most successful, you know, really wonderfully successful!" said Mac to the family assembly as he was leaving them.

With a few affectionate additions these were also Mac's last words to Jessie.

When Jessie returned from the street-door, she heard a hum of voices; but they were all silent as soon as she entered the room.

She knew they had been discussing Mac, and that her presence stopped them.

She said nothing, but quietly took up a Sunday book, and retreatedto a corner of the sofa.

She went out for a walk with her father during the evening.

"Ugh!" he said, with a shudder, the moment Jessie took his arm; "Ugh! Poor fellow; that's a bad look-out, Jessie!"

"But it's most successful," put in Jessie, bravely, her heart sinking the while at her father's foreboding tone.

"Ah! I've gone through it!" said Arthur Bayliss, with another shudder—"know what it is! You don't. I do!"

"You!" exclaimed Jessie. "Why, you never had anything like that!"

"No, thank God! But a man who was my constant companion for many years, died of it. I saw it through, poor fellow. Ugh!"

"That was a long while ago," said Jessie. "They can do such wonderful things now-a-days, that they couldn't do then."

"So they say! Well, my dear child, of course, I don't want to depress you; but—it's a bad case, Jessie! Perhaps it is better you should be prepared for the worst."

"I won't think of that yet," said Jessie, resolutely. "The doctor says it is successful. Why shouldn't we believe him?"

Arthur Bayliss shrugged his shoulders: "These cases are very rarely successful," he said.

"I believe you don't like poor Mac, father," said Jessie, bitterly. It was not often she

spoke bitterly, but her father's manner irritated her, and her nerves had been far too overstrung when she had left home.

"My darling child, I like him very much, *per se*," returned Arthur Bayliss, in his most amiable tone; "but you must remember that I have your interest to consider, and that when I say your interest, I mean your *real* interest."

"My real interest!" echoed Jessie, wondering what interest could be real to her that did not include Mac.

"Yes, Jessie. Remember you are now all I have to live for in this world. I cannot afford to throw away, nor consent to your throwing away, the best years of the life of the only being living who is precious to me."

"Throwing them away!" exclaimed Jessie, and her father could feel her hand quivering as it lay on his arm. "Throwing them away! I would sooner"—she hesitated and her breath came and went hurriedly—"I would sooner be the widow of Mac Carruthers than the wife of any other man in the world!"

"That's a very admirable sentiment, my dear, and does you infinite credit; I can imagine your poor mother would have said the same; and, indeed Jessie, your voice sounded very much like her's as you spoke then; but, darling, this thing will have to be looked at

very practically. Now don't go and jump at absurd conclusions, and suppose I want you to be hard upon the poor fellow; of course I don't want any such thing, but I want you to do what you do—and I feel that under existing circumstances I have, in a great measure, forfeited my paternal right over you—I want you to do what you do with your eyes open, that is all; I should not like you to come to me afterwards and tell me you did not know what you were undertaking. I'll tell you a little about my poor friend Warrington; I saw his case all the way through; I've seen several others since that time."

When our relatives feel it a duty to tell us what they know will give us pain they seldom shrink from performing their task thoroughly. Arthur Bayliss had acquired during his residence abroad a morbid liking for horrors; they had a kind of fascination for him, when he began to talk on a dreadful subject he could hardly check himself.

So the details of poor Warrington's case were related by Arthur Bayliss to his daughter with an elaboration that would at any time have been sufficiently trying to hear, the while Jessie and he walked arm in arm round Finsbury Circus.

Certainly Jessie would never at any time of

her life have to complain that she had not been warned; that she had not had all the horrible contingencies of the position plainly set before her.

Arthur Bayliss spoke of his lost friend with a great deal of feeling. He was a man who could always command any amount of feeling, genuine, too, *au fond.*

The narrative, however, would have impressed a casual listener with more pity for Arthur Bayliss himself than for the sufferings of his friend.

In listening to Arthur Bayliss one always felt, for the moment, that no man now living had gone through a quarter of such misery as he had endured.

Jessie, poor girl, was too heart-sick to think or feel anything acutely except that, come what might, she intended to be good to Mac.

"That's very shocking, father," she said, when, after they had been out more than an hour, they were again at John Harbuckle's door; "it's awfully, awfully shocking; but the doctors know more now, and it's been so very successful."

So very successful! Mac's letters grew bright and then brighter. He felt comparatively strong and well again. He caught salmon and

trout—he sent a fine fish to Trinity Square. "I work hard and I play hard," he wrote. "My uncle says I've a turn for politics and only require more knowledge. He and Alec are coaching me with great diligence and I am sticking to it with more than my usual pertinacity. I know the name of every voter in Birrendale, I verily believe."

So very successful! It would be too painful to trace that triumphant assurance backwards through doubt, to the certainty of disappointment.

The brightness faded away again out of Mac's letters; they grew quiet, but hopeful; then he dropped himself and his case out of them altogether.

Jessie remembered that anecdote she had heard her father relate to Major Merriman, about the man who was washed overboard, whom they saw carried hopelessly on the waves, further and further away from all help, drowning before their very eyes without possibility of rescue.

She thought of that scene often when she thought of Mac, but she never gave up hope for him.

And Mac himself clutched hope with a death-grip. He worked at his books and lists of voters as desperately as if he were certain the

success of a long life depended upon them, and as if he were not constantly talking of the return of Donaldson of Langdyke.

"The fact is," he said to Alec, "I mean to get all Donaldson's influence for our side. He has, or ought to have, plenty of influence in the dale; so I'll just show him the way he ought to go, and he'll go, no doubt of it; if he can do it without any trouble to himself.

"Don't be too sure," said Alec; "there are other people to show him the way besides you."

"Yes," said Mac, "but I managed to get a hold over him that no one else ever had, and besides that, if he has any political opinion at all it is on our side; I'll look him up as soon as he returns. Why it would be the makimg of him if he could take an interest in any mortal thing!"

"All right," said Alec, "you try! My father has done his utmost with him; but he says, 'What permanent impression can you make on a man whose mind is just like an india-rubber ball?'"

"You'll see!" said Mac. "I'll do that little stroke of business for my uncle, at any rate."

"I hope you will, old fellow," returned Alec, significantly," because it would make a great deal of difference to our little plans, you know."

This conversation took place one morning at the end of July in the gun-room at Muirhead, which was generally used by the young men as their study, and was, to their thinking, by far the most pleasant apartment in the house.

"Muirhead," Alison Bayliss once observed, and she was not a bad authority on such points, "Muirhead, like the popular hymn-book of the English Church, is ancient and modern. There is an old border tower covered with ivy, and about that tower is grouped, in picturesque, irregular fashion, a large red sand-stone house, with those corner turrets in the French baronial style, with roofs exactly like extinguishers, that I so dearly love. They have large oriel windows in the old tower, and in fact, wherever they can put them. There is a great wide staircase of pitch-pine, with fine long corridors above it. They have refurnished the whole place quite recently with the Edinburgh edition of London high art, and a very charming edition it is. The old original cattle stealers who inhabited the tower were very pious in their way. There is a sort of crypt where the sacred monogram, I. H. S., is still to be seen in great letters. This makes Muirhead very interesting to me; that is, I used to think it was so

before I fell in love with the Tower of London. You will understand, I am quite sure, that I don't think much of it now, uncle John," for it was to John Harbuckle, as a matter of course, that Alison gave this brief description.

"But you should, my dear," returned John Harbuckle. "From what you tell me, I should judge Muirhead to be an exceedingly interesting example—an exceedingly interesting example of a border tower of to-day."

The gun-room was in the old tower.

On the morning of that July day, when Alec and Mac had the conversation about Donaldson, which was only a repetition of what they had often before said, Mac was sitting writing at the table and Alec was reading in the oriel, when Alec looked up from his book as suddenly as it was in his slow nature to do anything, and said, with his usual drawl:

"Mac, that will be Donaldson coming up the brae; I wonder will he be at the Dryfesdales or at Langdyke?"

CHAPTER XV.

OUT OF DOORS.

"DONALDSON! oh, hey!" exclaimed Mac, springing up with the greatest alacrity. "Well, he can't have lost much time in getting over here, for the 'Fire-fly' was in the Mediterranean last week. It's kind of him to come so soon. With all his faults he was always considerate," and Mac went quickly to the window.

Muirhead stood at a good elevation above the moors around it. It was approached by a long drive that wound up the hill-side through woods of spruce and fir. Nearer the house the conifers gave place to fine specimens of those rarer trees of which the Laird was so proud.

Mac stood at the window watching Donaldson walking his horse up the ascending drive.

It was a comfort and satisfaction to him that Donaldson had sought him out so early, and poor Mac was already in that state of

mind and body in which a human being craves the notice and consideration of his fellow creatures, with a kind of hunger very real and intense; although he may hardly be able to put that craving into words. When Donaldson had nearly gone round the great circular lawn, all blazing with beds of bright flowers, Mac left the windows, went into the entrance-hall and down a few steps, and stood there waiting for Donaldson, who arrived in a moment or two.

"How are you, Carruthers?" "How are Donaldson?" exclaimed the two men, simultaneously, as they shook hands with vigour.

But before either could answer each had looked into the other's face. Donaldson looking down from his horse, Mac looking up.

Mac looked up and two thoughts, swifter than lightning, flew through his brain; the first was:

"It's nearly all over with him!"

But even as the change he saw in Donaldson flashed upon his mind, he noticed Donaldson turn his head quickly away from him with a slight but unmistakable gesture of horror.

He knew at once, without another sign, that it was all over between *them*. He raised his hand to his forehead, as if to shade his eyes from the sun, and asked, in his usual tone:

"Won't you come in?"

"No," said Donaldson, vaguely, patting his horse, "I think I won't; I promised Dryfesdale I'd be in to lunch. I was very sorry to hear so bad an account of you, Carruthers. I thought I'd just ride over and see how you were. How are you, though?"

"As well as I'm likely to be again," returned Mac, quite evenly. "I won't ask how you are," he added to himself.

"That's a bad business! I'm awfully sorry. Had an attack of the nerves myself lately; haven't got a nerve left."

"Well then, you had better come in and rest," said Mac. "Rather hot on the road to day, isn't it?"

"Yes, hot and dusty. No, thanks, I think I can't," said Donaldson, uneasily; "got to be back to lunch, you see. I only came over just to ask how you were, you know. Good-bye, old fellow, good-bye," and they shook hands again. "I say, though, I'm most awfully sorry for you, Carruthers, I'm awfully sorry for both of us, that I am. Good-bye!"

"Well, if you won't come in, good-bye!" said Mac.

"I'll come over again some day, when I'm not obliged to get back so early; some day, when my nerves are stronger, when I've got

the better of this attack. Good-bye again, old fellow!"

But although Donaldson grasped his hand with all the strength that remained to him, he did not look at Mac; neither of the men ever looked each other in the face again.

Mac stood on the steps for a few minutes watching Donaldson, as he rounded the lawn and slowly disappeared among the giant trees that hid his downward path.

He stood there on the steps beside the old border tower, where the fresh young ivy was glistening on the dark stems in the full sunshine of that July day. How brilliant was everything except his own fate! How concious he was of its brilliancy and of his own darkness!

The warm transparent shadows of the great trees crossed each other lightly on the grass, but the shadow on his heart pressed so heavily there it seemed to be cutting it in twain.

He watched Donaldson's brown-clad figure on the bright bay horse, with its glossy coat, until it dipped beneath the hill and was lost to him. When it was out of sight he had a conviction that he should never see it more.

He was right; they never met again.

But it was not that conviction which brought the look of intense pain into Mac's face as

he stood there in the sunlight, that pain had come when he had seen Donaldson turn away from him with that slight but unmistakable shudder.

The small particular instance that caused the pain was Donaldson's gesture; the broad and terrible truth it revealed to poor Mac was that he had become repulsive to his fellow creatures.

The simple fact was, Donaldson had turned from him. What he felt in all his being was:

"For thee the family of man has no use; it rejects thee; thou art wholly as a dissevered limb."

He could not return at once to the house; he could not even pass the window where Alec was sitting, he walked quickly across the lawn and far into the depths of the fir plantation.

The sunshine and the rich life in all things followed him there as he paced slowly over the spongy mosses among the firs.

He only knew that Donaldson, when he had turned away from him, had but done what every other man would do, if unrestrained by kindness.

For the first time in his life he felt himself cut off from his fellows, separated even from that bright physical world all around him,

with which he had always been so closely allied.

It seemed to him more than he could bear; but although unseen and alone he did not betray his feelings by any outward sign; he only strolled slowly over the soft deep moss, full of dismay.

As he strolled about, his thoughts, after a while, formed themselves into some sort of order; like this:

"Donaldson has turned from me: I am repulsive to my fellow creatures: therefore I am in honour bound not to sacrifice Jessie. It is my duty not to allow Jessie to sacrifice herself to me. I must give her up; I must make her give me up!"

In the Hawaiian Archipelago, as Miss Bird tells us, and as Mac himself had seen, there rises, like a blue "morning-glory" from a bluer sea, the Lepers' Island, Molokai. Mac had seen from the deck of the "Fire-fly" a transport, taking the lepers to their living grave, and heard the weeping of their relatives on the white coral beach. He thought of himself as one of those lepers now.

Beyond the woods he saw the broad Solway far away and a dim land beyond the Firth, lying warm in the noontide haze. He thought of Molokai, of himself and Jessie, and he said,

"I must give her up; I cannot take her with me there."

But there, below, sparkled the Birren; he looked at it steadily, and he remembered Jessie and the happy days when they had played together, and felt that it would kill him to give her up.

Then he put his foot upon all that feeling, as he would have done on the deck of a burning ship had duty kept him at the helm. If it did kill him to give her up, what of that? What was his life worth?

He made up his mind to his next step and walked steadily towards the house. On the lawn he met Alec, who had evidently been looking for him. Alec, kind fellow, never shrank from him.

"I'm going south by the night mail," said Mac.

"Aye!" said Alec, taking the announcement slowly in.

"You'll be seeing the doctor again?" put in Alec, as Mac did not at once say any more.

"Probably," answered Mac; "but I am going to see Jessie."

They were silent for a minute or so; then Alec said:

"I'll just go along with you, Mac."

"Very well," assented Mac, with indifference.

"I'm wearying to see your Tower of London," said Alec, with a touch of *navieté*, which was, however, entirely thrown away upon his cousin.

"There'll be a row," said Mac, very seriously.

"There'll be *that*," returned Alec, with a great and decisive emphasis on the "that."

"I don't want to be drawn into it," said Mac; "I've rather more than I can stand on my own account just now."

"I'll not trouble you on that score," said Alec. "But I am just going south with you to-night."

Alec went back to the house, and straight to his father's study.

Mac still lingered out of doors.

He had told Alec he was going south; already he had taken, he thought, the first of the final steps; this was the beginning of the end.

It was hard, too hard for words to express.

"Curse God and die!" rose up in his heart.

But he did not curse God, for out from the depths of the woods and up from the shining Birren, sung by the birds and by the soft "eye-music" of the waving boughs, came to

him, clear and sweet, the full-voiced chant that had broken the silence of the London streets:

"The Lord's name be praised."

There was no response in his heart; but he turned his face bravely to do what seemed to him his duty—to give up his Jessie.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SITUATION DISCUSSED.

LIFE at John Harbuckle's house in Trinity Square had, to all appearance, run on pretty evenly through the spring and summer, while Mac had been at Muirhead ; for Jessie, poor girl, if her heart rarely quite left off aching on Mac's account, troubled no one with her anxiety. She took it all very simply and sweetly. She neither shunned to speak of him, nor, even from Alison, sought continual assurances of sympathy.

A casual observer would hardly have noticed any change in her, but change there was; Alison noticed it, John Harbuckle noticed it.

She seemed to most people as merry as ever, merrier in fact ; but she had a readier ear for any tale of suffering, and a prompter hand to help.

John Harbuckle suggested that the girls should help in the Flower Mission his church carried on in the streets behind the Mint.

Jessie found great pleasure and comfort in that work. The poorest and lowest felt the strong secret hidden behind the sympathy of her bright hazel eyes.

The sorrowful knew there was sorrow there without any revealing word.

One person, however, did a vast amount of grumbling, not only at Jessie, but at poor Mac's calamity. That person was Arthur Bayliss.

He let all the household know that in his daughter's engagement to Mac Carruthers he was, under the painful circumstances, suffering a severe personal injury, not to say injustice.

If not every day, certainly three times a week, he asked Jessie for news of Mac, and invariably shrank and shuddered at the answer. Alison knew very well that whenever she saw any tears in Jessie's eyes that she had been talking with her father.

"I shall speak to him on the subject," said Alison, one night, with indignation.

"Pray don't! Of course he means it for kindness, and he has so many things to worry him, and his own health is so very bad. He can't help it, I'm sure he can't. I'll try not to care. Don't say anything to him about it," said Jessie.

"Of course I always do what you tell me, I won't attack him, then," returned Alison.

But although she kept the letter of her promise, she may be thought, perhaps, to have broken it in the spirit, for one evening, having seen Jessie and her father off for an evening walk, she went up to John Harbuckle's den and tapped at the door.

"Come in!" said John Harbuckle; "come in, my dear, I wanted to speak to you. I was on the point of going in search of you. Have you finished another paper?"

"Not yet," said Alison, gravely and as if setting the subject altogether aside; and she looked about for a chair.

There were but two in the room, both were filled with piles of papers and curly-edged old prints.

"Wait a minute, I'll move those," said the master of the den. "I am trying to arrange them, but it's slow work, very slow work;" and clearing a little space on a crowded shelf, he put the engravings up there in a somewhat disorderly heap.

"Now, my dear, there's a chair for you! I'll have one for myself directly."

The breeze from the open window gave some little trouble, but in another couple of minutes John Harbuckle was sitting opposite

Alison in front of his blotting-pad, and with both hands on the arms of his chair, swaying himself gently backwards and forwards as if in deep meditation.

"Well, Alison," he began, after rather a long silence, "and what was it you have to discuss?"

"Jessie," returned Alison, seriously, and somewhat uneasily.

"My subject too," said John Harbuckle, still slowly moving backwards and forwards. But neither of them appeared to be able to begin the discussion of that subject.

"I suppose you have her entire confidence?" presently said John Harbuckle, in a vague and tentative sort of way. Not that he had any doubt about it, but that he suddenly felt embarrassed.

"I know Jessie very well indeed," said Alison, "a great deal better than I know myself; she is not such a complicated person."

"No one ever is to ourself so complicated a person as ourself," remarked John Harbuckle, with a slight smile, stopping his swaying movement for an instant.

"Jessie always appears to me so very simple minded," said Alison.

"Would she object to giving me her full confidence likewise?" asked John Harbuckle,

leaning forward with hands clasped, and looking down on to the Persian mat that formed the carpet of his lair.

"Give it you! I'm sure you have it, uncle John," exclaimed Alison.

"Yes, I suppose I have in most things," said John Harbuckle, with a rather troubled smile; "but do you think she would like me to know exactly what her feelings are as regards that poor young fellow in the North? You see," he went on, gathering courage after a brief pause—"you see, Alison, I am very fond of Jessie; I was to have married her poor mother, you know; I have—(I am very fond of you too, my dear, but you are my own kith and kin, that is quite different)—I have a feeling about Jessie—that she is—her mother's child, in fact; so intimately connected with the sole romance of my prosaic, common-place life——"

"Common-place!" cried Alison.

"Well, well, never mind, my dear. To some minds such an affection as I had for Jessie's mother can come only once in a lifetime. Her mother is in heaven—but—she is also—in a widely differing sense—in our Jessie here. I am not wronging any one, I trust, when I tell you, but perhaps I ought not to say this"—his voice sank, he hesitated, deeply moved.

"But do say it, please," said Alison, gently; "that is, if it is not too painful."

"I cannot think I am wronging any one—when I say—I love in our Jessie what I recognize as—Her;" and again he paused. "I am sure," he went on, fearing that he might after all have said more than he was sure he had a right to say, "you understand me, my dear, don't you?"

Alison bowed her head without looking up.

"The reason I have told you this," John Harbuckle went on, "is, that I want to know exactly what are Jessie's own feelings with regard to Mac Carruthers. I have laid bare to you—I have told you what I have never told to anyone else—I have not done so without pain, but I have done so that you might get Jessie to confide in me entirely; and that, if she wished it, I might help her. Under the present sad circumstances, would it be a comfort to her if she married the poor young fellow?"

"Don't you think it seems very hard that if he is only to live a little while they should be separated for that little while?" asked Alison, fervently. "Oh, uncle John, she feels that very much; you will understand her; her father doesn't—or won't. You will understand that, just because poor Mac is ill and may die,

she wishes to be with him—while it is possible!"

"Of course she does! I was certain she did—I was certain there would be no shrinking back in her, poor darling; it has touched me very much to see her going her daily round of duty so cheerfully when I knew how her heart must be aching. She is a brave girl, Alison."

"That she is!" responded Alison. "And now what are you going to do?" she went on, suddenly falling into a most business-like tone.

"To begin with, I must have it out with Arthur Bayliss. I should have interfered before, but his health is so precarious. I must hear what he says, when I lay before him a proposition that has been growing in my mind for some time past. Don't speak to Jessie about our little talk, my dear; I hope by to-morrow or the following day I may be able to throw—supposing I say, a little light on the subject?"

"The subject being always—Jessie, I suppose!" said Alison, brightly springing up. "There now, I see you're tired of me, so I'll go and look after mother. But I tell you what it is, uncle John, if I go on living with such very romantic people much longer, you will find me one day writing a chapter with a heading

that will surprise everybody! Don't ask me what it will be about; I wouldn't tell you for worlds! dearest uncle John!" and when she had nearly reached the door she turned suddenly and bestowed on John Harbuckle such a caress as she had not given to anyone since poor Captain James Bayliss had been asleep by the Birren water.

This conversation took place, so it happened, on the evening of that brilliant day near the end of July on which Mac had wandered into the fir plantation of Muirhead, after Donaldson's visit had revealed to him a very terrible fact, which he had dimly known perhaps for some time, but which had never come home to him before.

It had become an established custom for Arthur Bayliss to walk round to Trinity Square every morning directly after breakfast. On the morning following Alison's little talk with John Harbuckle, however, Arthur Bayliss did not arrive at the usual time.

"Your father is late to day, Jessie," observed John Harbuckle, going to the window and looking along the foot-path below.

"Let us hope he is occupied with the Early Bird business," said Jessie.

"I think I'll walk round and see if he's all right," said John Harbuckle, with a thought-

fulness the sentence hardly seemed to warrant; but John Harbuckle had a way of saying the most common-place things thoughtfully.

He took his hat and went off at once; he never wore slippers:

"No, no," he had remarked, when Jessie had suggested that she should work him a pair; "no, no, my dear, that would never do; I always wear boots. I'm so constitutionally lazy that if I had to change slippers for boots, I should stay in doors many a time when I now go out. I must feel that I can go out at any moment the fancy takes me."

So Jessie had never worked those slippers.

John Harbuckle went round to Fenchurch Avenue, where he found Mr. Jim Robbins engaged in giving the finishing touch to the offices downstairs, and Mr. Jim's master lying on the sofa upstairs, airily attired in a loose suit of fancy chintz, a huge cup of tea on a chair beside him, and the *Times* at his feet.

"Attack?" asked John Harbuckle.

"More dead than alive," groaned Bayliss. "Find yourself a chair."

"Fine bright day, too!" said John Harbuckle.

"All one to me," said Bayliss, turning on his elbow, and stirring his tea.

"Worse than usual?" asked John Harbuckle.

"I don't know, I'm sure," returned Bayliss. "I'm sure to be all wrong when I've anything extra to worry about. However, this won't do; I must get into the office, dead or alive!"

"Can I be of any assistance to you?" asked John Harbuckle.

"Why, yes, you might call in at Tildesley's, and ask him to come on here at once; that will save my writing a note."

"Very well, I will do so. Anything else?"

"This will be, I expect, a very critical day with me," said Bayliss, without answering the question. "I may possibly require your advice in the evening. Can't tell how things may turn out."

"I came round to ask you when we could arrange for a little quiet conversation," said John Harbuckle; "a little quiet talk about Jessie," he added.

"Ugh! Poor, darling child! Don't mention her now! A fine thing for me, isn't it? Well, I must get up. Will you come here to dinner? Will you dine with me somewhere? Dinner will be a farce to-day for me, but one must go through the ceremony."

"No; no, thank you. Let us have a turn in the Tower Gardens this evening."

"All right. I'll be round to your place

about the usual time—that is, if I can manage it."

So they parted. John Harbuckle was by this time used to Bayliss's ways, and never hinted at home that he had thought him looking very much worse than he had ever seen him before; but he anticipated the evening meeting with a certain nervousness almost amounting to dread. Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie rallied him more than once on his extraordinary absence of mind during that day.

"What can have happened to you, uncle John?" Jessie asked, gaily, when John Harbuckle, in looking for a circular he had left on the mantel-piece, knocked over and broke a favourite little vase. Alison thought she knew, but she did not say so.

They were finishing dessert when Arthur Bayliss arrived, in a delightful frame of mind, such as they had not observed him to be in for some time past.

"Well, dearest child," he said, as he kissed his daughter, "I've had a good day; a splendid day!"

"How nice! Made your fortune and mine!"

"No, no, not quite that; but perhaps a few more such days would do it. Has uncle John told you?—I'm going to run away with him this evening."

"I haven't mentioned it yet. The fact is, you seemed so ill this morning that I thought I might perhaps have to go round to Fenchurch Avenue again, by-and-bye."

"Yes; I was feeling awful first thing today; but, as I've often found before, there's no medicine on earth like making money. Are you ready, Harbuckle? We're going for a turn in the Tower Gardens, Mary. Jessie, my child, you're looking prettier than ever. Good-bye, all of you, *pro tem.* We'll have some more music presently, won't we?"

"Then don't stay out too late," said Jessie, wondering at her father's unusual spirits.

He patted her soft, crinkly hair fondly and gaily, and followed John Harbuckle out of the room. Mary and the girls went to the window and saw the two men walking side by side towards the Tower Gardens.

"What can they have to discuss? Something important, I'm sure," said Mary.

"And pleasant too as well as important," said Jessie, but it never struck her that she herself was to be one of the subjects under consideration.

CHAPTER XVII

HIS NEW LIFE.

"AND so you've done a good stroke of business to-day?" said John Harbuckle, as he and Arthur Bayliss went along the west side of Trinity Square.

"Tildesley and I have settled matters to-day; but, as I've already told you, we've been a long while working up to it. I had an awful night; really, I thought it was all over with me!—nothing but worry; I'm feeling a sort of reaction now. Matters stand like this" —replied Bayliss, plunging at once into a long and detailed account of his financial position.

"Supposing we go down to the wharf?" suggested John Harbuckle, as they paused an instant at the gate of the Tower Gardens.

"All right," assented Bayliss, hurriedly, and then immediately continued his narrative with an excitement that offered a very striking contrast to his despair of that morning.

They went down to the broad wharf that

Henry the Third built a great many years ago, Bayliss talking rapidly all the time.

They walked up and down there for perhaps half-an-hour.

The high tide had only just turned, the river was still full, many vessels were slowly dropping down with the tide towards the sea; gold shone in the western sky, silver, and a white crescent moon, in the far east.

"The question then arises," continued Bayliss, still speaking with great rapidity, "shall it be done officially or non-officially? As for the larger firms, the whole score has, of course, been wiped off, and probably no one is much the worse by this time; but there are, I fear, smaller people who may have been seriously injured by my failure."

"One such case has come under my own personal observation," said Harbuckle; "a very painful case."

"As I cannot yet pay everybody in full, perhaps, instead of the dividend I spoke of, it would be better to find out the more needy and pay them off the first. What do you say?"

"I'll manage the affair for you, if you like," said John Harbuckle. "It is a kind of thing that is rather in my line; I know Liverpool pretty well; or rather, I know those who do."

"Could you? I don't care to show up there just yet; and that rather inclined me towards doing it in the regular way; but if you could spare the time it would be an immense relief to my mind; I should then feel that we were doing our utmost. You would be conferring a favour I could scarcely have asked."

"Not so very much!" said John Harbuckle, "I shall be obliged to be in Liverpool for some time shortly, I grieve to say, on account of that collision case. I will manage the affair for you."

"I begin to breathe freely once more!" exclaimed Bayliss, taking off his hat as if it oppressed him. "The cloud I've been under so long seems all but gone! Let us take a turn in the Tower Gardens." And after a further discussion of business details they came to the gate that faces the bonded warehouses on Tower Hill.

"I'm rather tired," said Bayliss, wearily, as John Harbuckle replaced the key in his pocket. "Let us sit down on that bench." And he and John Harbuckle sat down side by side under the acacias, and gazed at the walls and houses of the Tower as attentively as if they were looking at them.

"And what about your daughter?" asked Harbuckle, as he assumed his favourite atti-

tude, bending forward, with his hands between his knees.

"Ah!" sighed Bayliss, "my daughter is a great trouble to me! Not, of course, the poor child herself, because she's all I could wish her to be; but, ugh!" and he shrugged his shoulders, "I've seen that sort of thing and I know what it is. I shan't be able to stand another English winter; I ought not to have braved out the last. Somewhere about November I'll go to the South of Europe. I fancy"—and he moved his right hand about with a series of little movements, as if he were drawing a picture in the air; John Harbuckle often recalled his expression, which was intently fixed on that aërial sketch, with a strange mixture of dreaminess and acuteness —"I fancy I shall be able to combine business with pleasure in a most satisfactory way. I've heard again from those people at Marseilles; there's a fine opening there for palm oil. As soon as the winter has fairly set in I shall take Jessie abroad with me; we shall no doubt be able to enjoy ourselves very well in the health resorts of the Riviera, and I shall take care to keep Jessie out of England as long as I can. I'm sorry for the poor fellow, very sorry; but it is certainly not my duty to stand by and see my daughter sacrifice

herself. I object to the engagement *in toto*. Jessie, in some delightful sub-tropical place, will no doubt find that there are other——"

"I don't think so," put in John Harbuckle, with great decision.

"Oh, I don't know!" exclaimed Bayliss, his tone distinctly implying his belief in the possible fickleness of womankind.

And then he suddenly remembered that he was in the Tower Gardens.

And then John Harbuckle felt more vividly than ever—for the thought had been in his mind all the while they had been together there—that he and Arthur Bayliss were sitting under the acacias where Jessie's mother and he had talked so contentedly on that evening when Arthur Bayliss had come and stolen her heart away.

There was a long and awkward pause. At length Bayliss said, under his voice:

"I suppose we are both thinking of the same thing."

"I suppose we are," assented John Harbuckle.

"I shall never be able to thank you for all your kindness to me. That will be a debt I shall never be able to pay," said Bayliss, and there was, as John Harbuckle remembered, a something about his manner which he never could describe even to himself, but which

made him at once lose the antagonism that he until then had felt for him.

"Will you try?" he asked.

"Now you are going to nail me about Jessie," exclaimed Bayliss, half laughing.

"Nail you! No! I am simply about to tell you something you don't know. When—there is no need to shirk the memory now—when I thought I was about to marry Jessie's mother, having a small sum of money at my command, I bought a couple of houses, which have since been pulled down to make way for Victoria Street. My intention was to have settled those houses on my—on Jessie's mother. As it turned out, that was a splendid investment. I have never touched that money myself, except to lay it out. When I am gone, half of it will be for my niece, Alison, half, with your permission, for your daughter, Jessie. My will was made before your return."

"Oh, I say, Harbuckle, that's coals of fire with a vengeance!" exclaimed Bayliss.

"Not at all. Hear me out. I now propose, and it will make me happy if you consent, I now propose that you should allow Jessie to take her share on her marriage; with his little income and hers they might——"

"But it isn't the money, or the want of money—that's not the question!" cried Bayliss.

"I don't want to see another widow about the house! I don't want my daughter to be a hospital nurse, perhaps for years, and then a widow! Why sacrifice her youth and beauty?"

"Why, indeed!" said John Harbuckle, with much feeling.

They were silent, there came no ready answer.

"Come, Bayliss, you, if no one else, ought to know what a woman's heart is made of," said John Harbuckle, with a sort of compelling energy.

Arthur Bayliss was silent for a moment longer, then he suddenly rose up, and looking down on his companion asked, very distinctly, holding out his hand the while: "Would this arrangement make you happy?"

The old bachelor smiled gravely.

"Then, Harbuckle, you are the master of the situation."

John Harbuckle shook the proffered hand very warmly, and slowly rose up from the bench beneath the acacias, and stood by the side of Arthur Bayliss. A profound silence fell upon both.

They stood on the sloped coping, looking down into the moat. It was the same spot where John Harbuckle had stood on the night of the 7th April, when the sound of Arthur Bayliss's voice had brought back to him so

vividly all the past. Then, he had stood there looking down into the rising mists ; now, there were no mists, a school of boys was being drilled in that moat below. Then he had raised his eyes to a clear space between the four moonlighted turrets of the White Tower, where it seemed that heaven had opened, and gazing into that space so high and lifted up, he had asked himself, as in the sight of God :

"Do I forgive ? "

Now, all that space was filled with a sun-set glow, the pennants on the turrets shone like burnished gold, and he and Arthur Bayliss, rivals so long, were standing there, side by side, friends at last.

There was a long silence. Bayliss was the first to speak.

"Harbuckle," he said, with much feeling, "I will not ask you if you forgive me, because that would be an insult to you, I know you do ; but how did you learn to forgive ?"

"By being myself forgiven," replied John Harbuckle, gravely.

"You are a good fellow!" said Arthur Bayliss.

The last lingering remnant of enmity between the two men had vanished ; each felt he had still much to say to the other,

much that he could say now, that he never had been able to say before.

"I am going in, I will not be long. Will you wait for me here, or come in too?" asked John Harbuckle.

"I will wait here. It is a pleasant evening. I will stroll about until you return. You won't be longer than is absolutely necessary?"

"No, I have only to put up Alison's manuscript for Woolcomb; she had not finished it when we left home."

They went down together to the gate opposite the bonded warehouses.

John Harbuckle paused there and looked up Tower Hill.

"How often," he said, almost as if to himself, "how often, on such an evening as this, have I stood here and imagined this place as one sees it represented in old prints! How often have I seen all that hill crowded with rabble, great balconies full of people, all come to see 'one small head taken off,' as Lord Lovat said. There," pointing to All Hallows', "there is the same brick tower and the same belfry that always, in the prints, overlooks that crowd. But, I think"—and he turned to his companion with an affectionate expression which had in it something that Bayliss had never seen in John Harbuckle's face before—

"the incident that has most deeply impressed itself upon my mind is, old Cardinal Fisher, walking calmly up this hill to the scaffold, repeating over and over again: 'This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' Think of that Bayliss when I am gone."

He unlocked the gate, put the key into his pocket, and turned away with a gravely happy face, and a quiet blissfulness in his heart.

Arthur Bayliss stood by the gate for some minutes watching him as, with bowed head and hands clasped behind him, John Harbuckle slowly plodded up the hill towards his home.

Bayliss watched him until he could see him no more; and then he thought of the Cardinal and his last words.

"This is life eternal," he repeated, or rather the words repeated themselves over and over again in his heart, as he turned from the hill and the gate, and began pacing the broad straight path of the Tower Gardens above the moat; "This is life eternal! This is life eternal!"

If any one could have looked into John Harbuckle's face as he slowly went up Tower Hill, he would have found it full of love and tenderness; the last words of the Cardinal's

text—the Name—was in his heart, and along with it the great up-lifting secret of Forgiveness. At that moment John Harbuckle would not have felt it at all hard to lay down his life for Arthur Bayliss.

Hardly seeing the material world around him, that dear familiar world he loved so well, John Harbuckle came to his own door, and there he saw a sight that brought him back to Trinity Square in a moment. His niece, Alison, was just coming down the steps, and with her was a young man, no less important a person than Alec Carruthers; a stranger, of course, to John Harbuckle.

"Oh, uncle John!" exclaimed Alison, brightly, she was looking a great deal prettier than John Harbuckle had ever seen her look before, "make haste upstairs, uncle John, for Jessie and Mac have some fine news to tell you. This is Mac's cousin—Mr. Alexander Carruthers, of Muirhead, and you will be pleased to know he takes a great interest in antiquities. So I'm just going to show him that piece of old London Wall that is still left on the other side of the Square."

"That's right; it may be gone directly," said John Harbuckle. "I hope your cousin is better, Mr. Carruthers. We have all been very deeply concerned about him."

"He's seen another man, a most eminent man, and he says it's twenty chances to one that, after another operation, he'll be just all right again," said Alec. "They didn't cut deep enough."

"That is a great relief to my mind," said John Harbuckle.

"And to mine," said Alec Carruthers. "We ought to have gone to this man at first."

"I came in to put up your manuscript for my friend Woolcomb, Alison," remarked uncle John.

"Oh, thanks! you'll find it on your study desk, I've just put it there," said Alison, who, however, never made the slightest at tempt to return, in order to see the precious document safely posted.

What a thing it is to be an antiquary! Alison was, as you perceive, even more anxious to show Alec that bit of the old Wall than concerned about the due packing up of her own literature.

"Well, good-bye for the present," said John Harbuckle. "Alison, do not forget to impress upon Mr. Carruthers that this is undoubtedly the finest square in"—("Europe," he was about to say, but he checked himself)—"that is—South of Carlisle."

They all laughed. John Harbuckle withdrew

into his own house. Mary Bayliss, standing by one of the windows in the dining-room, watched Alec and Alison pass together along the fine piece of wide pavement in front of the Trinity House; and she thought of Mrs. Carruthers of Muirhead with very great satisfaction indeed.

John Harbuckle's footstep was not light, Jessie heard it, although she and Mac were so deeply engrossed in conversation.

She flew to the drawing-room door.

"Oh, uncle John, come in!—come in!" she exclaimed. "We're just both of us mad with delight! He's seen another doctor, who's going to make him just as well as ever!"

"My dear child! My dear fellow!" exclaimed John Harbuckle, seizing the hands of both; for Mac had come forward directly after Jessie.

"He's so very confident; he says it's twenty to one that it will be all right again," said Mac; "I'd given up all hope; I don't mind telling you now, that I was coming here to——"

"You shan't say!" cried Jessie. "Oh, uncle John, he was wicked enough to think that if he came and asked me to give him up, I would!—did you ever hear of anything so horrible! He doesn't deserve to get well

after that!—does he?—Oh yes, he does, though!—doesn't he?"

"I should think he did, indeed!" exclaimed uncle John; "go on Mac."

"Well, on the Carlisle platform we met a man whom we hadn't seen for a long while. He was coming south; so we all went along together. He was awfully sorry for me; but he said: "Look here, old fellow, don't lose heart, my brother was just in your case a couple of years ago, and there's nothing but a slight scar left now. So he told me all about the man his brother went to, and I've been to him to-day, and he says it's twenty to one but he'll make a cure of it. I feel as if that man's words had put fresh life in me! I don't think I ever felt before what a glorious thing life is! It was so fine to be able to tell Jessie I was going to live! Wasn't it, Jessie?"

This sort of thing was too much for John Harbuckle. Mac had thrown his arm round Jessie, and she was clinging to him in a tumult of the wildest excitement. As for Mac—as for both of them, anyone could tell they had been crying.

"Well, well, well," said the old bachelor; "I'm very thankful, very thankful! You will not be leaving in a hurry, I suppose? Come up to my den before you go. I've something

to tell you that may interest you both; but I know you can't spare any time just now. Let us say half-past nine; fare you well, for the present."

"We really have a great deal to talk about just now," said Jessie.

"Oh, that will go on for ever! She is a darling, isn't she, uncle John?" Mac asked, unsteadily, and as John Harbuckle closed the door he was sure he heard a great many kisses.

John Harbuckle was a long while packing up Alison's manuscript; he fell into a train of thoughts that he could not easily control:

"A dear girl, a dear girl, worthy to be her mother's daughter!" he said. "I hope their hope will be realized, with all my heart I hope so; but I shall miss her! Well, what of that? Nothing—nothing! Only—she is Jessie, and I shall miss her. Well, I must go and tell Bayliss!"

At last, after many delays, Alison's manuscript was put up and addressed. John Harbuckle went downstairs and out of the house without disturbing any one. He posted the paper. He turned towards the gate by which he had parted from Arthur Bayliss, he presently opened it and again entered the Tower Gardens.

He went to the bench under the acacias; Bayliss was not there.

He passed the dark Beauchamp tower and the houses that face the green; the windows were all sombre now, they and the pennants on the White Tower had ceased to flame in the sunset. The gold had died out of the sky—the dove's wing was deepening into that sweet transparent grey that precedes the raven's twilight. The boys had left the moat, even the soldier and his lass were gone now. The look-out of the Bell Tower at the corner, hanging against the sky like a great bird-cage, guarded a quiet solitude.

John Harbuckle, thinking of the good news he had to tell, walked along the path less slowly than usual; but Arthur Bayliss was not to be seen anywhere about. John Harbuckle looked in at the summer-house opposite the Devereux Tower; the ash-tree, like a fan, was spreading over its roof, but no one was there; the sentry, pacing above the opposite bastion, within which a light glowed like a furnace, was the only living being to be seen in front of it; behind it, the stream of life and traffic was ebbing away to its evening rest along the public road above. John Harbuckle went on, he passed the New Barracks, lighted up here and there, and the gloomy old prison lodgings

that guarded them : but he saw no other creature anywhere. "Can he have left the gardens? Hardly, I think, except to return to us ; and yet I was a long while, he may have grown tired of waiting."

He came to the little ascending turning where Mac and Jessie had stood when Mac had wished to go along that path under the shadow of the dock warehouses, that ends in a little wilderness in which is a grave.

That was where he himself had first seen Arthur Bayliss. He looked along the path, no one was there now.

He went up the little ascending turning within a stone's throw of the spot where he had heard the voice on the 7th of April.

"He may be in the arbour," he thought. "It is late, though, for him to be there."

He came near to that rustic arbour so screened from the broad roadway by elder bushes that, but for the never-ceasing hum of the great City, one might feel oneself far away in the rural provinces. He came near—the very streets seemed lulled to quiet that still evening— he came near—he saw Arthur Bayliss.

He hastened his steps ; his heart hurried its beat.

He went nearer—what was there in that

quiet form that struck John Harbuckle so cold?

He came close to him. He touched the hand, he raised the fallen head; he felt for the heart—his own stood still—he knew that other man was dead.

THE END.

Turn over.

APPENDIX.

HARDLY had I finished this narrative, when, paying a visit to Tower Hill, I found that neighbourhood was entering upon a new phase of existence.

"Poor John Harbuckle!" I exclaimed, as I turned from Barking Alley into Trinity Square, "poor John Harbuckle!"

The sight that met my eyes was indeed heartrending to anyone possessed of the least particle of what my dear friend calls "the right feeling."

The Metropolitan Railway Company, about to complete the inner circle, had just made a deep cutting for their underground line right through the gardens of the square. A gang of navvies, who had formed a rough quadrangle of loose planks, were sitting at their mid-day meal, cheered by a fire that burned in the centre.

That was several months ago.

To-day, November 8th, 1882, I again went over some of the ground described in this book.

Perhaps for the last time I saw King William's statue standing at the junction of Cannon Street and Gracechurch Street, where Arthur Bayliss found it on his return from exile. It will not be there much longer. This familiar city landmark is to be removed very soon.

The beautiful old houses in the angle of Little Tower Street still remained untouched. There was a large tuft of grass on one of the deep-eaved roofs. Great Tower Street was already in a state of transition. The houses had been pulled down at the corner of Mincing Lane.

I turned up Mr. Pepys' Seething Lane. The old brick tower of All Hallows', Barking, was dingy as ever, but a great hoarding hid Barking Alley. A wide, new street is coming directly from King William's statue to Tower Hill, and so on to Whitechapel.

I left Barking Church-yard, found a great stack of new bricks at the corner by the bonded warehouses.

The turf of Trinity Square Gardens had been replaced and was already green again.

Opposite No. 14, Trinity Square, the house the sheriffs of London used to hire on the occasion of an execution, from the windows of which the prisoners walked on to the scaffold, and just within the Gardens, on the very spot, indeed, over which the block once stood, is now a large, square ventilating shaft, lately sunk by the Metropolitan Railway Company, its form suggesting, even to the dullest imagination, a cenotaph in memory of those who from this spot took their last look of the Tower and of this world.

A few yards further on, I came to Catherine Court. I had trembled for this court; happily, it is still spared. The old iron-work over the entrance smirked gaily in bright claret-coloured paint, quite fresh and new; the old shop rejoiced in green, heightening, by contrast, the dignity of the time-honoured brick of the early Georgian houses within.

Then I went on to the Trinity House.

There I stood and looked at the view.

Take it for all in all, is there in England, in Europe, in the whole world, anything finer? If so, where?

The day was superb; a brilliant noon in November, in which every line and every bit of colour told.

The pavement gleamed white, the fresh turf green; the children ran about in the gardens; the great Tower of London stood in the airy beauty of grey, as seen on a fine winter morning, the gold of the crowns and pennants, of Time itself,

as marked on the Tower clock, shone brightly; a red flag floated gaily in the breeze far above the slight belfry of the church on the green; there were masts and wreaths of steam from the river; there were light mists among the Tower battlements; there was the ceaseless noise and stir and clatter of traffic of the great city. How full of crowding life, and yet how wide and peaceful it all was!

Surely John Harbuckle is right, it must be "incomparably the finest square in Europe!"

But one should see it on a day like this.

At length I went on a few yards, and came to a shining pitch-pine railway station, as new as new could be.

This new station is at the corner of a blind turning, at the end of which stands a weather-stained fragment of old London Wall.

I entered that Metropolitan station; I went westwards, and great was my delight to find that on every platform we came to there was to be seen a large placard, on which was a bold woodcut of the Tower of London and the announcement that there were trains to it every few minutes.

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